

BLUE BOOK



MAGAZINE

MARCH, 1951

25 Cents

Men of America — Mark Twain

Painted by John Fulton

THREE SHORT NOVELS

DARK ROLINDA

by Peter B. Kyne

THE STORMBOUND HERD

by Stephen Payne

THE SHADOWED FACE OF LUNA

by Donovan Fitzpatrick

Many short stories and articles



MEN OF AMERICA . . . MARK TWAIN

The Lincoln of Our Literature

FOR the past four years BLUE BOOK's cover paintings have been based upon episodes in the history of the forty-eight individual States. With the conclusion of this series, we turn from places to people—to the Men of America whose enterprise, courage and character, even more than the precious heritage of a new continent in which to make our home, have made us what we are. Some of these men, like Lincoln and Washington, have already appeared in the States series. But there are a host of others, some well known, some scarcely remembered, who because of colorful character or important work, richly merit commemoration. . . .

We have chosen Mark Twain to lead off the new series because he seems specially to represent what has been the spirit of these United States

—the spirit which the critical Briton Kipling characterized:

Enslaved, illogical, elate,
He greets the embarrassed gods,
nor fears
To shake the iron hand of Fate
Or match with Destiny for
beers.

The life and works of Mark Twain are of course too familiar to everyone to require elaboration here: His boyhood in a Mississippi River town; his apprenticeship to a printer, which led him to reading and thence to writing. His four years as apprentice and pilot on the Father of Waters; his inability to take sides when the Civil War closed the river; the knockabout wanderings through the West which produced "Roughing It;" his story of the Jumping Frog which brought him to

public notice; his long career as our best-loved author. His contemporary William Dean Howells has perhaps best appraised him:

"A man who will be remembered with the great humorists of all time, with Cervantes, with Swift, or with any others worthy of his company; none of them was his equal in humanity.

"It is in vain that I try to give a notion of the intensity with which he pierced to the heart of life, and the breadth of vision with which he compassed the whole world, and tried for the reason of things and then left trying. Emerson, Longfellow, Lowell, Holmes—I knew them all and all the rest of our sages, poets, seers, critics, humorists; they were like one another and like other literary men; but Clemens was sole, incomparable, the Lincoln of our literature."

Readers' Comment*

Authentic Historical Fiction

I TRAVEL a good deal by train and I like to have something to read which will be recreational and relaxing without being a sheer waste. Most magazines can either be leafed through in a few minutes, or else the articles and stories, though they kill a good deal of time, accomplish just that and leave behind a bad taste of futility. About a year ago, being an American historian, I noticed BLUE BOOK's historical covers and have been reading it ever since—not entirely, now, when traveling.

I have been impressed by the number of historical articles and stories and by what seems their essential accuracy. I sent the "King Arthur" story (March, 1950) to a correspondent of mine in England, a novelist, historian and archaeologist, who commented that it embodied some of the most recent and trustworthy researches in the history of Britain after the Roman withdrawal.

And of course it is a great relief to encounter a magazine which is intended primarily for reading rather than as an advertising medium.

KENNETH W. PORTER

Without Offensiveness or Arrogance

OTHER men's magazines my husband brings home have occasional stories or articles that interest me, but truthfully, BLUE BOOK is the only one I read from cover to cover. It gives me welcome insight into the masculine world of work, adventure and history-making—and all without a trace of the offensiveness or arrogance I've found in other publications. It's the kind of book I'm willing to leave about for the children and visitors to read.

About the only suggestions I'd venture to make are, don't change the format at all, and please print more yarns by Nelson Bond and the writer of "The Rhebaville Murders." Oh, yes, and don't let Peter Wells get away from you!

—MRS. HELEN B. YERKES.

*The Editors of BLUE BOOK are glad to receive letters of constructive criticism and suggestions; and for the ones we publish each month we will pay the writers ten dollars each.

Letters should not be longer than two hundred words; no letters can be returned and all will become property of McCall Corporation. They should be addressed: Editor of Letters, Blue Book Magazine, 230 Park Ave., New York 17, New York.

BLUE BOOK

March, 1951

MAGAZINE

Vol. 92, No. 5

Three Short Novels

- Dark Relinda** by Peter B. Kyne 72
A fine story of racetrack life by the author of "Cappy Ricks."
- The Shadowed Face of Luna** by Donovan Fitzpatrick 88
A flight to the moon involves stranger perils than control of a space-ship.
- The Storm-Bound Herd** by Stephen Payne 102
A novel of cowboy life by a Westerner who knows a lot about it.

Eight Short Stories

- Six Hours to Dixie** by Wilbur S. Peacock 2
Drama aboard a Mississippi boat of which Sam Clemens was the pilot.
- The Unpremeditated Wizard** by Nelson Bond 14
Black magic pervades this fantasy by the author of "Conqueror's Isle."
- Flame Across the Night** by Robert J. McCaig 24
Shooting trouble when the storm brought down the charged wires.
- Last Man In** by Joel Reeve 34
A talisman joins Officer Murphy and two friends in trouble.
- Combined Command** by John F. Wallace 40
Should the skipper have stopped the troopship to save castaways?
- The Faithful** by Owen Cameron 46
He had to deal with a girl who believed an escaped murderer innocent.
- The Flare** by John Clagett 53
The author knows what it's like to be caught in a P.T. boat by a flare.
- The Last Day of My Life** by Allan Vaughan Elston 64
There are few basic plots for a story; this one comes close to novelty.

Stories of Fact and Experience

- War Gods of the Orient** by William Ashley Anderson 11
For 2,500 years the Chinese have been schooled in warfare by the precepts of two ancient masters of deceit and strategy.
- Wanted: Job for Experienced St. Bernard** by Ib Melchior and Will Sparks 20
Modern roads have reduced his usefulness; will he move to Tibet?
- I Fly into Typhoons** by First Lt. Dodson Graybeal 31
It is routine for this weather pilot to dare the utmost in storms.
- A Forgotten Air Race** by C. Lester Walker 58
No one completed this 1911 air race across the continent within the time limit, but one stubborn pilot did finish the journey.
- Arms and the Woman—IX.** by Fairfax Downey 62
Bridget Divers—Union Cavalrywoman.
- The Cruise of the Maggie Murphy** by John J. Ryan 116
We have here abridged a forthcoming book about two boys who voyaged to Alaska in a home-made boat to make their fortune salmon fishing.

Special Features

- They Called It Spontaneous Combustion** by Morrison Colladay 57
The Financier 101
Written, embossed and embellished by Peter Wells.
- Who's Who in This Issue** Inside Back Cover
Cover Design Men of America—Mark Twain
Painted by John Fulton.

The short stories and novel herein are fiction and intended as such. They do not refer to real characters or actual events. If the name of any living person is used, it is a coincidence.

PHILLIPS WYMAN, Publisher

DONALD KENNICOTT, Editor

BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE is published each month simultaneously in the United States and Canada by McCall Corporation, Marvin Pierce, President; Lowell Shumway, Vice-President and Circulation Director; Francis Hutter, Secretary; J. D. Hartman, Treasurer. Publication and Subscription Offices: McCall Street, Dayton 1, Ohio. Executive and Editorial Offices, 230 Park Ave., New York 17, N. Y. MANUSCRIPTS and ART MATERIAL will be carefully considered but will be received only with the understanding that the publisher and editors shall not be responsible for loss or injury. SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION: \$2.50 for one year; \$4.00 for two years; \$6.00 for three years in U. S., Canada and Pan-American countries (Add \$1.00 per year for other countries). Send all remittances and correspondence about subscriptions to our publication office, McCall Street, Dayton 1, Ohio. IF YOU PLAN TO MOVE SOON please notify us four weeks in advance because subscription lists are addressed in advance of publication date and extra postage is charged for forwarding. When sending notice of change of address give old address as well as new, preferably clipping name and old address from last copy received. MARCH ISSUE, 1951, VOL. LXXXVII, NO. 5. Copyright 1951 by McCall Corporation. Reproduction in any manner in whole or part in English or other languages prohibited. All rights reserved throughout the world. Necessary formalities, including deposit where required, effected in the United States of America, Canada, and Great Britain. Protection secured under the International and Pan-American copyright conventions. Reprinting not permitted except by special authorization. Printed in U. S. A. Entered as second-class matter November 12, 1930, at the Post Office at Dayton, Ohio, under the Act of March 3, 1879.



Six Hours to

BATON ROUGE lay behind now, sinking into the night, the fog drifting in about the *Dixie Belle*, distorting the lonely echoes of the steam whistle and staining everything with dank moisture. The side wheels splashed a muted thunder of churned water, and the wake spread and disappeared.

She moved like a great patch of light in the darkness, the red of her

furnaces spreading wide, the yellow of her lantern-lit decks and saloons and cabins as bright as fresh-minted gold against ebon velvet. Music came from the saloon, the *whang-whang* of a banjo, the tinkle on a piano and the whisper of a crying violin. Laughter was there too, and voices; for this was the last stretch of the old Mississippi to New Orleans, and with the dawn, the *Dixie Belle* would finish its

long run from Louisville on the Ohio River. . . .

Six hours to Dixie. Six hours of riding a muddy mile-wide flood. And like a king on a throne, the pilot rode in his pilothouse, hands feather-light on the wheel, narrowed eyes peering at the glint of water ahead.

He didn't turn as the door opened at his back and the Captain came through in a gust of fresh air. The

dows, peering into the night. "Think we ought to tie in?"

The pilot shrugged. "I've seen it worse than this," he said. "'Course, it's your boat."

"Is it?" Captain Blaine said as though to himself. "That's a debatable point. We hit Dixie at sunup, or I lose my contract and the *Dixie Belle*."

Sam Clemens spat at the cuspidor. "Heard something about that," he admitted.

He was young, perhaps twenty-three, but there was confidence in his manner, and Captain Blaine smiled in the darkness.

"Thanks, Sam," he said. "I won't forget this, win or lose."

He went from the pilothouse and down the steps to the top deck. His nerves lost some of their tension now, for he knew the pilot was trying his best. There might be accidents, or trouble; but the man was good, and he was trying for more than a handful of dollar bills.

Overhead, the twin stacks spewed dark smoke and trailing sparks into the night; and he seemed strangely alone for a moment. He paced along, conscious of the chill mist, then hesitated, seeing the lone figure at the stern.

He expected trouble, and prepared his gang for it; and his hand sought the pistol in his pocket as he went aft.

"Who's there?" he called, and the figure whirled and went rigid at the sound of his voice.

"I said, *who is it?*" Blaine snapped, and now his gun was in sight.

"Me, Kurt Haskell—oh, it's you, Captain!" There was obvious relief in the man's voice.

"Oh!" Captain Blaine pocketed the pistol again, feeling strangely foolish.

"I was just taking a breath of air," Haskell said with a short laugh. "Never seen the river at night before."

Captain Blaine hesitated. He'd never seen the man before the trip, but there was an instinctive aversion in him to the fellow, and he held no desire for conversation.

"You're liable to get a chill back here," he said, and turned away.

"I'll be all right," Haskell said, and struck a sulphur match on a pocket striker.

The flame glowed up and touched a cheroot. He drew in smoke, his face vulpine and suspicious. Eyebrows slanted upward, and his upper lip was a bit whiter than his face, as though he might have shaved a mus-

tache lately. Then the match flame died, and night crept in again, and he was but a dark shadow against the rail.

He watched the Captain disappear down the steps to the saloon deck, then sighed deeply and turned again to the river. *Six hours, he thought, six more hours, and then I'll be safe.*

He shivered at the thought, ignoring the music and sounds which lay beneath his feet. He had never killed a man before, and the memory of the murder still haunted him.

It had been so simple at the time. The Elite Card Club in Memphis had closed for the night, the last gamblers and revelers gone, the tables bare of all but cards and chips, the lamps, except one in the corner, turned out. Smoke still layered in the air, and the odor was dead.

He had come out of his hiding-place then, sidling along the wall until he could see Thomson at the table in the rear. He and Thomson had been partners once; then a deal had soured, and Thomson had saved his skin by putting all the blame on Haskell. Now Haskell was back, and an accounting was to be made.

He shifted the twin derringer into a more comfortable position, then stole silently forward, until he was but a dozen feet from Thomson. He thought he made no sound, but a stiffness had come to the fat man; and now his hand left the stacks of gold-pieces and darted for the gun on the table.

"No, Thomson," Haskell said brutally, and the other's hand dropped to the green cloth and stilled.

"Haskell?" he said, and at the other's wordless grunt, he turned slowly, his greasy face wrinkling in a smile, but his dark eyes still as cold and expressionless as those of a snake.

"Hello, Thomson," Haskell said. "I've waited a long time for this."

"Me too," Thomson said. "Why didn't you tell me you were coming? I'd of made you welcome."

"Yeah!" Haskell said, then gestured with the gun muzzle at the safe. "Open it, Will," he said. "You've got ten seconds."

Sweat grew and balled and slid down Thomson's face. "Listen, Haskell," he said, "we're partners, you know that." He swallowed. "There wasn't any sense in both of us going to prison, you know that. And I've gone along just as if you were out. There's plenty for both of us."

"Yeah!" Haskell said. "And now I want my share. Open that safe."



SAM CLEMENS WAS THE PILOT ON THE *Dixie Belle* WHEN THIS EXCITING SITUATION CAME TO ITS CLIMAX.

Dixie

steady thunder of the engines came in a low pulsing vibration, but other sounds were muted and far away.

"Sam," the Captain said, "it's getting worse."

Sam Clemens grinned, and laid the wheel to larboard another spoke.

"We'll get there," he said confidently.

Captain Blaine sighed. "I hope so," he said, and came to the forward win-

He thought for a moment that Thomson was going for his gun. Then the courage went completely from the fat gambler, and he swung from his chair, to his knees before the safe. It was double-padlocked, and the keys chattered on the metal before they sprang open.

Thomson drew the padlocks free, then swung the door back. A faint frightened smile was on his face as he lifted out the small valise inside.

"It's all here, Haskell," he said, and his laugh was strained and unnatural. "You know we don't trust banks now any more than we—"

The first slug bent him backward, and the second blasted the life from him. He toppled sidewise, and his dead eyes glared hatred at Haskell.

Then the killer was opening the valise and scooping the money from the table into the partly-full bag. He was gasping, and terror was a blind agony in him. But he made no mistakes. He had planned this *coup* too long to make mistakes.

He blew out the lamp and slipped from the gambling club. Only a prowling cat saw him leave. The virtually soundproof room had muffled the shots. There would be no alarm until the cleaning-women and help came in the next afternoon. And by then he'd be far down the river, toward New Orleans and a ship for France.

Now on the upper deck of the *Dixie Belle*, Kurt Haskell shivered and wondered if there were pursuit behind. He was conscious of the thick pads of money in his pockets, and his fingers touched the derringer in his waistcoat pocket. He'd never go back; he knew that, not now.

He threw the cheroot away and went down the steps which led to the saloon deck. They were slippery with the thick mist, and he went cautiously, taking no chances. The music was louder, and looking through a window, he could see the twenty or thirty passengers in the saloon.

The card tables were at the rear, of course, the long gleaming bar at the other end. There were other tables at either side, separated by chest-high partitions. Most of the passengers were men, but a few were women, each with a chaperon; for despite the semi-formality of a steamer on the river, some conventions must be kept.

Haskell hesitated, seeing the poker table, which was occupied. Five men were there, the professional gambler as icy outwardly as he was inwardly. There was a logger down to Dixie for a spree. One man was probably a drummer, and the fourth a small planter. The last was Colonel Fawcett, big and bluff and white-haired,



his laughter spilling over every win or loss, but his eyes cold and shrewd, and somehow very tired. Haskell had thought to cultivate him for the trip, for the man was one of the biggest planters along the Mississippi. Then common sense had prevailed, and he had given up the idea. There was no time left for the plucking of suckers; he was fleeing the country, and the more inconspicuously he did it, the better.

His gaze went from the poker table, swinging toward the bar. Then it flicked back, caught the cameo quality of the girl's face. She sat with a grim-faced Negress in a booth; and as her eyes came up and touched his, she flushed in confusion.

"I seen that, honey; I seen that white trash smirk at you," the Negress

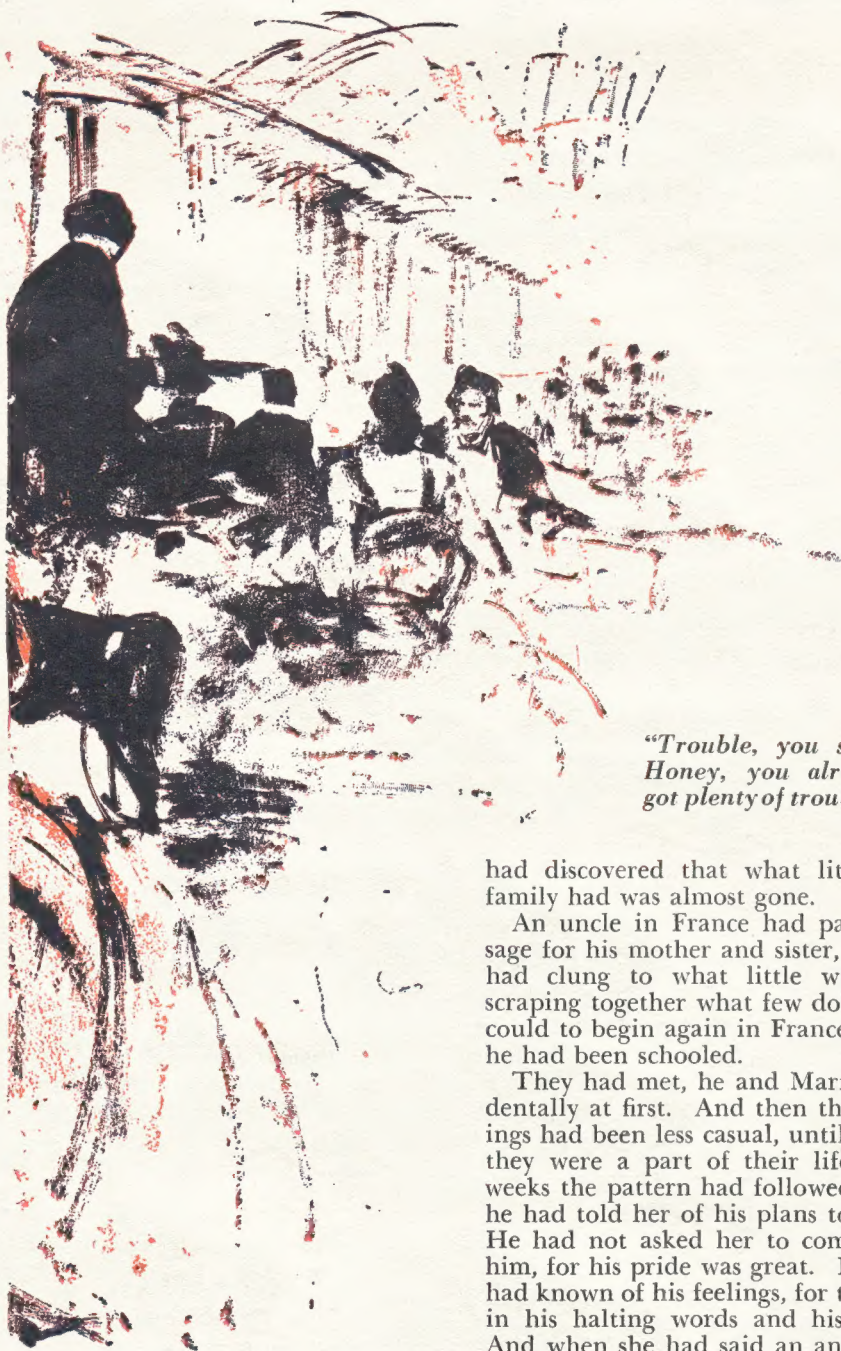
said. "I'll have the Captain whup him off the boat."

Marie Lemoyne smiled then, tiredly and yet in sympathy. "Now, you hush, Clorinda," she said. "He wasn't flirting with me; and I want no trouble."

The duenna bobbed her bandana-clad head. "Trouble, trouble, you says! Honey, you already got plenty of trouble. Why I ever let you come on this steamboat, I'll never know. Right now, your pappy's raising all kinds of old Ned around the place."

Tears came to the girl's eyes, but her back stiffened, and her soft lips firmed.

"I don't care," she said. "He lied, lied to Tom and to me. I'll never go back."



*"Trouble, you says!
Honey, you already
got plenty of trouble."*

"Not even if the boat is late?" Clorinda asked softly.

"Not even then," Marie said.

But she wondered if she would.

For this was a thing which was not done by those of quality. This was running away; this was the culmination of a romance which her family could not condone.

"Sharecropper, white trash!" Those were the kindest things said of Tom Rigby.

That they were untrue, her family knew, but would not admit. The Rigbys had never been wealthy, but their blood was good. It was only that Marie's father had, at last, tricked them of their land, including it in his holdings. Tom Rigby had been at school then, far away in France. And when he returned, he

had discovered that what little the family had was almost gone.

An uncle in France had paid passage for his mother and sister, but he had clung to what little was left, scraping together what few dollars he could to begin again in France where he had been schooled.

They had met, he and Marie, accidentally at first. And then the meetings had been less casual, until at last they were a part of their life. For weeks the pattern had followed, until he had told her of his plans to leave. He had not asked her to come with him, for his pride was great. But she had known of his feelings, for they lay in his halting words and his kisses. And when she had said an answer to his unspoken question, he had declared he would go alone, but that he would send for her within the year.

Then it was that someone had spied and told her father. The scene between her and her family had been short and bitter. Threats had been made, and she knew that Tom's life would be forfeit unless she agreed to their demands. It was not a strange situation, but common for the times. Class division was great, built on blood and money, and could not be breached with impunity.

She had seen Tom no more. He had left for New Orleans, taking a steamer at the landing early one morning. And it was only by accident, days later, that she discovered the trickery involved. Forgery had been employed, a letter purporting to

be from her saying that she was engaged to another and that she held no more desire for him. And the letter which came so secretly to her had been of the same tenor, except that his reason for leaving her was that he had realized their romance was but a passing fancy, to be forgotten almost at once.

She had not discovered the trickery, until Clorinda had heard some of the kitchen gossip and relayed it. Moreover a friend had seen Tom in New Orleans and told her of his plan to sail for France on a certain date.

Then had she come to her decision. Her note had been brief. *"I shall arrive on the Dixie Belle. If you love me, I shall go with you to France."*

The note had gone downriver unknown to her family. And her plan to follow had been almost as brief and to the point. Ostensibly she was to visit a friend upriver. Clorinda and she had boarded a steamer bound for Louisville, then transshipped to the *Dixie Belle*. They had remained in their cabin until miles downriver from the Lemoyne estates, and then emerged, satisfied that none aboard could reveal their presence.

And now Marie Lemoyne and maid sat in the saloon of the *Dixie Belle*, aware of the slowness of the boat, held back as it was by the crowding fog. Perhaps five hours lay between them and New Orleans; and if they were late, the ship for France would sail without them. Or more terrible, perhaps Tom would not be at the dock to meet them; perhaps he no longer cared, or had not received her note, or had sailed. . . .

*The boat tipped; Blaine struck,
knocking Haskell unconscious.*





Blaine expected trouble. "Who's there?" he called. "I said, who is it?" he snapped.

"You keep your chin up, honey," Clorinda said then. "We gonna find things turning out all right." She chuckled reassuringly. "Why, look, the Cap'n ain't worried about nothing!"

And worry *had* slackened from the Captain's mind a bit. He stood at the bar, fingering the empty glass, conscious of the fact the pilot had slowed the great driving paddles until they barely turned.

Of course, that was a usual thing when going downriver in many places. The current was strong, and only headway must be maintained. When power was needed, Clemens would turn it on, signaling with the brass bell-pulls, sending the driving wheels to churning, while sweaty Negroes fed the ravenous furnaces with four-foot billets of resinous wood.

And so the Captain had another drink, idly watching the poker game. The drummer had dropped out, but the others played as before, tight-faced now, cautious, risking much on the turn of single cards.

Colonel Fawcett led the betting, pushing in a stack carelessly; and

Captain Blaine envied him. Now, there was a man who never worried. Wealth was his, and his position in society was secure. He was a man to whom a stack of gold-pieces was a casual thing to be won or lost without comment. . . .

And even as Colonel Fawcett thrust in one of his last remaining stacks of clinking gold, words whirled in his mind and became strong and even and terrifying.

"Five stacks left," he said to himself. "When they are gone, I am ruined and my name disgraced."

HE drank thirstily from the glass sitting before him on the table, then risked a glance at the fourth card dealt. Another queen to match the pair he held back to back. There was a pair of aces out, and the logger had a possible flush. The professional gambler showed nothing higher than a king.

"Beats me," the fourth man said, and turned in his cards.

"Call," the logger said, and the gambler nodded as he pushed in coins.

The logger caught up the cards, and the first card paired the king in the gambler's hand. Colonel Fawcett kept his smile, but his eyes were narrowed as they watched the turning of the fifth card to his hand. A *trex*. His hand held three of a kind. *Hollowness* crept into his belly, but his hand was casual as he lifted his glass for another drink.

"I'm afraid I have you, Mr. Hartley," he said to the gambler.

"Not yet, not yet," the logger cried, and laid his last card before him.

But the spots were black, and he wanted red; and so he snorted wrathfully and called for another drink. Only Colonel Fawcett and Hartley were left now; and on the face of it, the gambler had won again.

"Check!" Hartley said thinly, barely moving his lips.

"Five hundred!" Colonel Fawcett said, and thrust a stack forward.

Shrugging, the gambler turned his cards down, and the pot was the Colonel's.

His hands were shaking a bit as he reached for the money. Always they shook when he won, and he knew now that the fever had touched him and would never leave. *And yet, he told himself, if I but get even, I shall never gamble again.*

GET even! Laughter came to him, and he forced it to be still. Even! He had lost a hundred thousand in the last six months, and nowhere could he make that up. He was a thief, and unless a miracle happened, he would be unmasked.

His face went white at the thought, not in cowardice, but in knowing what the news would do to his wife and daughter. He had stolen from them, really, for the money had belonged to them, left in trust by his wife's father. It was gone now, most of it lost over the tables of the Elite, vanished at the flick of a card.

He had been cheated; he knew that now, for he had heard the stories of others, and slowly the truth of Thomson's gambling-hall had come out. The stories had come too late, though, for him. Mortgage had followed mortgage, and cash had followed cash, until at last a measure of sanity had come, and he knew himself for the thief he was.

He would have killed Thomson, if that had been the solution. But there was a code, a gentlemen's code, which said that a gambling debt, crooked or not, must be paid. He could kill the man, but nothing would be restored. His vanity would be satisfied; but his wife and daughter would still be robbed.

And so he had made this last effort to recoup his losses. He was a thief, and so he stole again, taking the last

he could, some twenty thousand, and boarded the *Dixie Belle* for New Orleans. There he would make his final play. He would play again, for the final time.

Thus it was when he boarded the *Dixie Belle*. But a table was there, and men to play, and he was a weak man, a gambler afraid to gamble with big things. He heard the flick of cards, and he made his play aboard the boat, hoping to increase his stake for greater play in New Orleans.

And now he racked the coins he had just won, trying to hide the tremble of his hands. Three thousand back, and almost twenty-five hundred left of his original stake. Fifteen thousand he had lost.

He thought of that, and panic came. Perspiration stained his white collar, and the liquor lay lead-like and cold in his stomach. But his voice was bluff and hearty and as assured as usual.

"Your deal, Mr. Hartley."

He barely felt the solid thud of the drifting log striking the keel of the *Dixie Belle*. He was cocooned in the thoughts and desires and frustrations that only a weak man can have when he sees victory slipping from his grasp.

BUT in the pilothouse Sam Clemens swore fitfully as the steamer brushed over the floating log and drove it to one side. He piloted more by instinct than by sight, gaining his bearings only now and then when an eddying air current lifted the fog a bit.

He wanted to let the *Dixie Belle* run free, for he knew the stake the Captain played for, and he liked the man. Captain Blaine had done him many favors, and now he wanted to make a fair return. The Captain had had bad luck this past year, losing one ship when a boiler blew, and now fighting to hold this last contract.

If he could hold it, Clemens knew, Captain Blaine could get new financing. And with new capital, he could get back on his feet again. Trouble was, though, the rumors had it, that a new company wanted Blaine's contracts. And threats had already been made: *Quit, or we stop you*, the threats had been. And on the river such threats made sense. Pirating had become more subtle, but competition was still keen. A blown boiler, a crippled ship, even murder, solved a lot of competitive problems.

Sam Clemens sighed and spun the wheel a bit, then rang for more speed. Maybe he'd tear the bottom out of the *Dixie Belle*, but he'd give the Captain a fair shake in his gamble.

The wheels spun a bit faster, and the steamer belched more smoke and steam. She came more into the current and farther from shore. She

was a proud ship, and she wanted to run. Only the hand of the pilot held her in. If the fog lifted, she would race. But now she must creep along, for there were many unseen dangers ahead—like the monster "sawyer" which fought to free itself from a muddy bank in the river. Roots and branches clawed at the water, seeking help, and the thick trunk seemed to writhe, as the sawyer struggled to tear itself loose. Once free, it would float into the current, deadly, almost unseen, ready to battle anything which challenged its might in the muddy flood.

And so it fought like a living thing to rise from imprisonment; and above it, creeping at quarter speed, came the *Dixie Belle*, but a few hours now from New Orleans, its final destination.

ONLY a few more hours. Dace Hartley glanced at the ornate clock over the bar and reached for another cheroot. He was bored with the poker game, even though he was winning. It seemed to him as though there had never been a time when he had not sat at a green-clothed table and watched gaudy bits of pasteboard flicker in smoky light. It seemed to him that if he had to do it the rest of his life, he would go mad.

He hated the men against whom he played. Poor or wealthy, dirty or clean, any race, they sickened him. Their hands shook and their breath was short, and they drank too much and talked too much.

And they despised him.

That he hated most of all.

They gambled. They bet their money; they went in debt; they stole so that they might gamble. They bet on horses and fighting cocks and flicking cards and the number of seeds in a melon. They gambled every day of their lives.

And they despised him because he was a professional gambler!

He did it as a means of livelihood. His skin was pale because of the hours spent indoors. His hands were long and dextrous, and his fingers could do tricks with cards that only another professional could detect. He was crooked when he wanted to be, which was most of the time. But mostly he played the odds, knowing his business as a banker knows the laws of interest; and so money flowed his way over the passing of years.

But he wanted respectability, or what passed for respectability; and so he planned to obtain it. He had the money; he needed only the chance. And so when he had formed the syndicate, staying far in the background, he had put his money to use. A man had drowned, and another had been scared out of business. A



"I was taking a breath of fresh air," Haskell said with a short laugh.

steamer had blown its boiler; and subtle threats had done their work. Within a week, he would control a major part of the shipping on the river, either outright or through intimidation. This, the *Dixie Belle*, was the last of his obstacles, and it would be erased this night.

He could have paid to have the steamer wrecked; but there was a conceit in him, and a hatred for Captain Blaine, and so he planned the attack as one which he would do alone. The bomb was ready, carefully weighted with black powder and needing only the touch of his cigar to the fuse. It would wreck one paddle wheel, making it useless, but it would not injure the boat greatly. And that too was planned, for he intended to add the *Dixie Belle* to his fleet when plans were complete.

He knew the terms of Blaine's contracts. They were iron-bound, and a few hours of delay would break them automatically. Let the *Dixie Belle* arrive beyond contract time, and the contracts would be his, that he knew.

He had thought, when the engine trouble developed upriver, that there would be no need for damaging the boat. But the trouble had been located and dispensed with; now the only solution was to go ahead with his original plan.

And the gods of chance had been on his side this night; for it had been necessary to remove the inner plank-



Sam Clemens grinned. "We'll get there," he said confidently.

ing which shielded the starboard wheel, in order to facilitate repairs. Now he could fasten the bomb directly to the paddle wheel with one deft twist of a curved wire. He could do it leisurely, without fear of being seen. And so he looked at the clock and calculated the time left, and knew his plan must reach completion within the hour.

"Up five hundred!" Colonel Fawcett said loudly.

He was sweating openly now, the hard brittle glaze in his eyes that a loser has. He was conscious only of the cards; he was alone with them and the other players. The music he did not hear, and that the saloon was almost emptied made no impression.

"Five hundred," he said impatiently.

His voice ran the length of the saloon; Kurt Haskell shuddered and finished his drink, then called for another. So it must have been in the Elite these months past. Thomson was a smart man, a clever man; and he must have trimmed many suckers. He would not have trusted much of his money to banks, as he had declared; for sometimes the law is a tricky thing, and losers might regain what they had lost to crooked gamblers.

But hearing Colonel Fawcett's voice, bringing back memories of gambling halls as it did, frightened Haskell. He swallowed his second drink, shivering at the bite of the raw liquor. Then warmth came, and with it false courage, and he straightened a bit. To hell with the law now! Two, perhaps three hours, and he'd be safe. He'd go where he pleased and buy what he pleased, and his money would get him into places barred other men.

THE thought was good, and he relished it. Slow drunkenness was coming, but it was subtle and not yet arrived; and he was conscious of sudden strength and bravery. He thought of playing in the game, then discarded the notion. He wanted to

talk, but most of the people left were in groups. Then he saw Marie Lemoyne again, and he grinned a bit.

Now there was a fine young filly. Breeding written all over her. French, probably, with her thin aristocratic nose and dark coloring. And she was slender and curved, her silken dress molding the smooth clean lines of her breasts and arms.

He nursed a third drink, thinking, wondering how to get rid of the harpy with the girl. He'd seen other duennas, and they were like avenging angels if their charges were molested. A fellow didn't have a chance when one of them was around.

He mulled the thought, licking his thin lips. He saw that the Negress watched him; and an idea came. Surreptitiously, he found a bill in his pocket and held it at his side so that only the woman could see. Then he jerked his chin in a signal which could not be misinterpreted.

He was still signaling, when Captain Blaine's hand trapped his arm, twisting it; and he looked up to see the bleak anger in the other's face.

"Mr. Haskell," Captain Blaine said softly, so softly the sound was more terrifying than if he had shouted. "if I catch you on my boat again, at any time, I'll whip you ashore."

"Now, listen—" Haskell spluttered.

"You listen," Blaine said. "I've seen that trick before, and I don't like it. Finish your drink and leave this saloon. And stay out of my sight until we hit New Orleans."

HE released his hold, standing square and implacable. Haskell hesitated only for a moment, then spun and went across the saloon and out-side to the deck.

Clorinda watched him go, and black hatred was in her eyes at the insult given her and her charge. Her hands were fists in her lap, and only the thought that she was "quality" kept her from following the man outside and berating him.

"What is it, Clorinda?" Marie said softly, and the maid shook her head.

"Nothing," she said. "Now lookee, honey, you've not had a smidgen of sleep. That ain't right."

"I can't sleep," Marie said, smiling wanly. "Anyway, it will be dawn soon, and time to leave the boat."

"Well, I don't care," Clorinda snapped, "whether the boat gets there or not. You go along to the cabin now, and rest. Lord knows what tomorrow's going to bring. And I want you to rest, anyhow."

"All right, all right!" Marie agreed, and came gracefully to her feet.

Clorinda led the way across the floor, smiling approval on the Captain at the bar. Blaine bowed formally as the slim girl passed. She nodded

courteously, and then was gone through the door held open by her maid. A wisp of fog blew in, then faded in the warm air of the saloon.

"Enough for me!" the logger's voice sounded from the gaming table. "I learned my lesson."

DACE HARTLEY smiled perfunctorily, idly stacking coins with long fingers. Impatience burned in him, but he reasoned he still had time.

"And you, sir?" he said courteously to Colonel Fawcett.

Colonel Fawcett tore the cards of his last hand in half, then dropped them idly to the table. His face had paled somewhat, and his hair was a bit tousled; but his voice was steady.

"I believe that is enough for tonight, sir," he said quietly, and thrust back his chair. "A last drink on me, gentlemen?"

He was smiling as he came across the polished floor to the bar. Absently, his fingers touched his pocket. Two gold eagles lay there, the last. This was the end of the world as he knew it. He had made his play, and he had lost. He had made his gamble and the gods had laughed.

Now he would buy a final round of drinks.

"Your health, gentlemen," he said and lifted his glass.

"And yours," the echoes ran, and they drank.

Colonel Fawcett laid the gold-pieces on the bar. "I will have one more for the long trail," he said clearly. "And with the change you shall drink my health in Dixie."

"Yes sir!" the bartender said, smiling with huge white teeth.

"Excuse me," Dace Hartley said quietly, and moved toward the door.

He went through, hesitating only for a moment. But no one followed, and he went along the deck, almost groping. Two hours before landing now, and that would be perfect. The *Dixie Belle* might still limp into New Orleans, but several hours late.

He smiled a bit, as he came to his door, double-checking it with face close to the numerals on the panel. Then he lifted the latch and entered, closing the door softly behind. He struck a sulphur match and lit the lamp which swung in gimbals.

He drew the traveling carpet-bag from beneath the bunk and opened it with a key, amused momentarily at the idiocy of locking a bag which could be ruptured by a knife in a fleeting second. Then he lifted the innocuous paper box from the bag and laid it on the bed. Paper it was on the outside, but the interior was of solid wood, taped and tightened and encasing the blasting charge.

He fitted the short length of fuse into place, then smoothed soft wax



"Five stacks left," he said to himself. "When they are gone, I am ruined and my name disgraced."

about it, until the bomb was entirely watertight. A two-foot length of heavy wire was bent and fastened about the bomb, one end bent into a spring hook which would hold all to the paddle wheel.

Satisfied, Hartley lit a cheroot, savoring the smoke and running over his plan again. Fifteen seconds he would have in which to reach his cabin again, after he had lit the fuse. He nodded. That would be time enough. And of course, barring accidents, he could not be identified.

He buttoned the small bomb beneath his coat, then blew the lamp and left the cabin. The steamer's whistle shrilled overhead, drawing echoes from the shores. Casually, conscious that he might be watched, Hartley began an aimless pacing toward the exposed wheel. . . .

Marie Lemoyne stretched wearily on the feather mattress, feeling the

strain of the passing day and night permeating her entire body. Almost did defeat touch her then, and she wondered if she were really foolish to pursue her plans completely through. Then resolution came to her eyes; Tom would be there, had to be there.

"I'll get some coffee, honey," Clorinda said. "And that no-good cook better not talk back to me."

"All right, Clorinda," Marie said, too tired and listless to argue.

Clorinda wrapped a shawl about her head and shoulders, pausing at the door.

"I wish we was there now," she said. "Ah cain't stand much more."

Shaking her head, worried about the girl inside the cabin, she stepped outside and began making her slow way along the slippery deck. The smell of the water was close and dank, and the whistle's continual crying now was nerve-rendering. She kept her hand on the cabin wall and moved along, the mist barely brightened by the light which flowed through half-closed windows.

She saw the figure ahead, weaving toward her. Carefully, so that they might not run into each other, she took a cautious step forward. She caught the smell of whisky; then Kurt Haskell's white face showed momentarily in a window's glow.

"You—you, Mister!" she cried then, all of her pent-up anger and fury suddenly unleashed. "I'll show you to treat my mistress like a hussy!"

SHE went forward like the avenging angel to which she had been likened by Haskell. And he, seeing her fling from the mist like some apparition, held for only one moment, then fled in blind panic. He crashed into the rail and almost fell. Then he caught his balance and ran, fingers searching for his door.

"I'll show you!" Clorinda cried, but the whistle drowned her voice. She whirled forward, forgetting everything but the necessity of teaching this trash some manners.

And ahead, Kurt Haskell sobbed drunkenly, searching frantically for

his cabin. He found it at last, his hand lifting the latch. He catapulted inside, then slammed the door, hearing the clatter of feet hurrying by outside.

Sucking for air, hands outstretched, he went toward the bunk and the lamp at its end. He sat for a moment, catching his breath, then fumbled a match from his pocket and struck it on the wall. He lit the lamp, then sank to the bunk again, regaining some composure, but totally drunk now, the liquor effect striking him like a flood.

He lay back, striking the leather valise, and pushed it aside in blind irritation. Then dim reality came, and he turned his head to stare at the valise.

It was not his.

He sat, shaking his head drunkenly. Automatically, his hand went out and flipped the valise about. It slid to the floor, opening, spewing its contents onto the floor. He saw the glint of metal, and bending, he lifted the gun into sight.

And even as he straightened, the door flung open, and a man was there, cold-eyed and vengeful.

"You dirty damned thief!" the man said.

Kurt Haskell lurched from the bunk. His trousers caught on the coat hook on the wall, cloth ripped, and money sprayed in a fluttering shower. The newcomer took a single step forward; and Kurt Haskell tilted the gun muzzle.

"Stay back."

THE sawyer tore itself free of the mud and whirled into the current. Black it was in all its scaly length, and its branches were claws reaching outward. It trapped a floating log; and then as the *Dixie Belle* came hurtling toward it in the fog, it reached upward to tear out her bottom. . . .

Dace Hartley huddled against a wall, working the tip of the cigar into a bright red smear of heat. He had the bomb free now, and he knew he was unseen. He braced his feet against the pounding rhythm of the paddle wheel and crossed to it, half-turning from the water it flung from whirling dripping paddles. He spread his feet even wider, for there was no rail between him and the wheel, and bending, he sought the end of the split fuse with the glowing tip of the cigar. . . .

The sawyer came up and out of the water and reached for the *Dixie Belle*. It was a black tentacled monster without eyes or life, and yet it moved as if under some sentient compulsion. The steamer bore down on it, and water chuckled softly through the reaching limbs.

And then Sam Clemens saw the grotesque uprooted tree waiting in the muddy flood. "Dear God!" he whispered, and the wheel spun madly beneath his hands. The *Dixie Belle* seemed to squat and turn, like a racing horse, then quartered the current, trying to outrace the scaly hands clutching at her belly.

Almost did she make it. Bells clanged below, and the starboard wheel ceased its pounding drive, barely turning. The sawyer struck, clinging, rasping, searching for weakness. The *Dixie Belle* lifted, bore a bit to larboard; and then the great starboard wheel was turning faster, walking up and over the breaking limbs, thrusting the tree deeper into the water, thrusting the monster away.

The boat tilted and then came back. Voices cried out in alarm, and somewhere a lamp fell and broke and sputtered out.

Captain Blaine was thrown against the rail. He was forward of the starboard wheel; and for a moment he had glimpsed the shadow of someone at its side. The whistle screamed, and dimly, shaking his head against the pain a rocking blow had given it, he thought he heard the wild yell of a man. Then the scream was gone, and he was alone on deck, still clinging to the rail and bending outward to watch the sawyer tear free and go drifting aft. For a second, he thought he saw a body in the writhing branches; then the tree was gone, and he would never know.

He ran toward the steps which led to the pilothouse. The *Dixie Belle* was rocking, gaining her equilibrium again, both wheels turning now. He saw the flare of light from the opened door, and was almost past, when a glimpse inside brought him to a plunging halt, his hand grasping at the door's edge.

"I warned you," Kurt Haskell was screaming in a blind drunken frenzy.

And as the rocking boat tipped Colonel Fawcett toward him again, he emptied the gun into the big man's chest. Colonel Fawcett fell, bending at the waist, staring in weird shock at the crimson-leaking wounds in his chest. He smiled a bit then, even as he fell, and his words were a faint sound against the backdrop of the steamer's whistle.

"Thank you, sir," he said. "You saved me the trouble."

Captain Blaine struck, knocking Haskell unconscious.

And the *Dixie Belle*, with the fog lifting in the first faint warmth of the day, its last danger passed, began its final run to a berth in New Orleans. . . .

It was morning now, and New Orleans lay before the steamer. The wharf was alive with people and carts

and horses and bales and boxes, everything moving in a helter-skelter pattern. Freight moved in a steady stream across the stages, sweaty Negroes and hard-muscled whites working at top speed. Mates yelled, and slow smoke still drifted from the stacks. Passengers went down the stages, talking, laughing, and waving goodbys to Captain Blaine standing on deck beside the great brass bell.

The pilot came from the pilothouse, stretching lazily in the morning sunlight. His hair was bushy and tousled and his eyes weary from the hours behind the wheel. But he was smiling, his mustache dark against his tanned face; and he paused a moment at the Captain's side.

"A good run, Sam," Captain Blaine said. "I owe you a lot."

Sam Clemens nodded, watching the gray-clad police take a struggling prisoner over the stage to the wharf. He shook his head a bit; and Blaine seeing Haskell being taken away, scowled thoughtfully.

"Dirty murderer," he said. "The Colonel caught him robbing his quarters, and Haskell killed him." He shook his head. "You know how much he took from the Colonel's valise? No? Well, there was over a hundred thousand dollars." He shrugged. "The police will hold it for the Colonel's widow and family. Damned shame."

The pilot nodded, watching Marie Lemoyne and her maid crossing the wharf through the hodge-podge of restless activity.

"And Hartley?" he asked.

The Captain spat. "Overboard, I guess, when we hit the sawyer. I made a report, but I doubt he made it to shore. He didn't look like a swimming man to me."

HE smiled suddenly, seeing Marie Lemoyne hesitate in midstep. Sam Clemens smiled, too, and for a moment they were still.

For the man was big, and he was running across the wharf, to take the girl in his arms and whirl her about and kiss her and then let her down again; while the maid for a moment lost her frown and beamed contentedly upon her charges, one old and one new.

And then Captain Blaine straightened. "Let's get some breakfast, Sam," he said. "I've got some business with a few bankers."

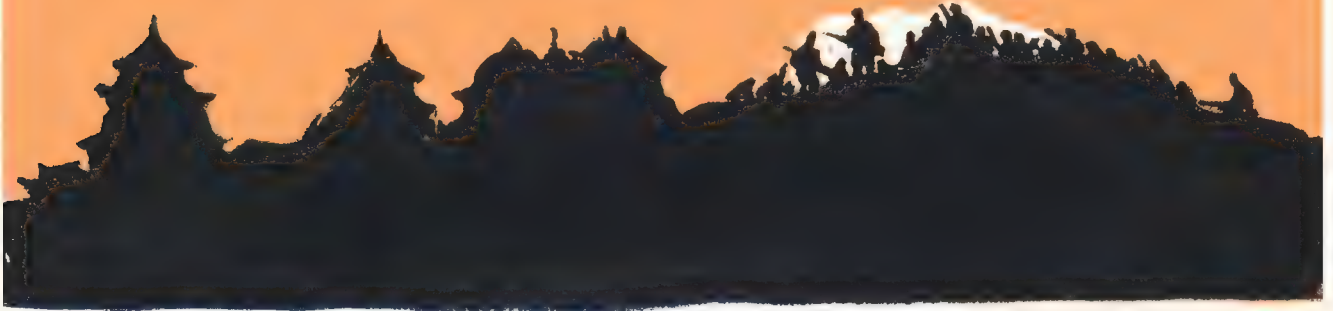
Grinning, side by side, rivermen, they went along the deck and toward the steps which would lead them to New Orleans and a future which shone and beckoned brightly.

And the *Dixie Belle* tugged impatiently at her hawser. She was a proud steamer and she wanted to run—as she would, in the days to come.

War Gods of the Orient

For twenty-five hundred years the Chinese have studied the arts of deceit in war.

by WILLIAM ASHLEY ANDERSON



AGAIN and again we permit ourselves to be startled and befuddled by the mastery of tactics and strategy displayed by Oriental leaders. While it is convenient to ascribe this to the military tutelage of Russian officers—forgetting that they too are more than half Oriental, besides being close students of the campaigns of the Kublai Khan, and the Manchu, Nurachu—there is a much more profound reason for the military skill of the Japanese, Mongols, Manchus, Chinese and Koreans at the periods of their ascendancy.

There are two great Oriental masters of military science whose Principles and Maxims have had as powerful and pervasive an influence upon Japanese thought, primarily, and upon Chinese and Manchu war leaders, as did Plato and Aristotle upon European ethics and government.

Their names are Sun-tzu and Wu-tzu. Many of their maxims are known the world over. They have been repeated and paraphrased by innumerable leaders such as Napoleon, Frederick the Great, and Hitler. They were constantly applied in the recent campaigns of Japanese, Chinese, Russians.

And they are being boldly and effectively used by the Chinese and Koreans today. No one can really comprehend the war potential of China and Russia without studying the Principles of Sun-tzu and the Maxims of Wu-tzu. And yet if we were not confronted with the shocking spectacle of defeat in Korea, we might treat these war gods with contempt—because both masters of military science lived over two thousand, five hundred years ago!

Before dismissing these ancients consider this first Maxim of Sun-tzu:

Upon the Army the life or death of the State depends. It is the means of the existence or of the destruction of the State.

Maybe you don't believe that; but Stalin and Mao Tse-tung do! And so did Mussolini and Hitler.

Among the very last of the Maxims of Wu-tzu is this savage utterance that can best be appreciated by those who have seen the endless fields of eight-foot-tall kaoliang in North China, Manchuria and Korea along whose rows an Oriental army can march thoroughly concealed from observation by land, air or the long fingers of radar:

If one desperate robber be hidden on a wide plain surrounded by a thousand searching men, he can put fear into each of them. Now, if one desperate man can put fear into the hearts of a thousand, a host of fifty thousand may be led against Chin, and there is nothing to fear. (Chin was the most powerful of the kingdoms of China.)

How much this has affected our retreat in Korea may be judged by the constant complaints of infiltration by the "men in white." Sun-tzu was certainly the first professional soldier to advocate the use of sound to frighten the enemy. Echoes of that elemental principle were the Japanese calls in jungle fighting in the Pacific, and now the use of bugles and whistles by the Chinese Communists.

Ideas such as these became indelibly fixed in Oriental minds since boy-

hood, for they were written down in schoolbooks as exercises, much as American boys used to write, "Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of their party." The difference is that the Oriental boy did not write a vague generality; he understood that what he wrote was a practical rule of life. Who can doubt that our generals and statesmen would have profited if they had learned in boyhood, what Japanese boys learned, that generals must guard against five dangerous faults:

1. *Blind impetuosity, which leads to death.*
2. *Overcautiousness, which leads to capture.*
3. *Quick temper, which brings insult.*
4. *A too rigid propriety, which invites disgrace.*
5. *Over-regard for the troops, which causes loose discipline.*

You can take each of those faults and find an instance in our history where it cost us dearly.

In this day of rapid communication, of uncensored war news, and of unbridled political comment and public inquiry and exposure, it is almost impossible for our generals to observe the following, though its importance is tragically demonstrated day after day by both Russians and Chinese:

War is a thing of pretense. Therefore, when capable of action, pretend disability; when near the enemy, pretend to be far; when far away, pretend to be near.

How many of us suspected the presence of the Japanese fleet the day be-

fore Pearl Harbor while the Japanese envoys were actually conferring with our Secretary of State? How many were prepared for the aggression of the Soviet-inspired North Korean Army or suspected its strength and fighting ability? How many believed there was a real threat from the Chinese Communist army mobilizing along the Yalu?

Recently our newspapers were full of authenticated reports of a massing of a Chinese army of six hundred thousand soldiers for an immediate invasion of Tibet. Anyone with an elementary knowledge of geography, if not logistics, should have recognized the absurdity of this; but it gained such widespread publicity that it became plausible to leaders of opinion everywhere and must have affected important decisions. "When far away pretend to be near!"

Now recall the conduct of Stalin, Molotov, Vishinsky, Gromyko, Malik and the recent delegation of Chinese Communists who were invited to be heard by the United Nations, and consider whether or not it would have been helpful to us to be equally familiar with this ancient admonition:

Allure the enemy by giving him a small advantage. Confuse and capture him. If there be defects, give an appearance of perfection, and awe the enemy. Pretend to be strong, and so cause the enemy to avoid you. Make him angry, and so confuse his plans. Pretend to be inferior, and cause him to despise you. If he have a superabundance of strength, tire him out; if united, make divisions in his camp. Attack weak points, and appear in unexpected places.

There is not a single sentence there to which we cannot add a sad commentary. But that is not all!

Everywhere to make preparations is to be everywhere weak. The enemy is weakened by extended preparations, and we gain in strength. . . . If the enemy be many in numbers, prevent him from taking advantage of his superiority, and ascertain his plan of operations. Provoke the enemy and ascertain the state of his troops; feint and discover the strength of his position. Flap the wings and unmask his sufficiency or insufficiency. By such feints and excursions we may produce upon the enemy an impression of intangibility which neither spies nor art can dispel. . . . Having decided on the day and place of attack, though the enemy be a hundred leagues away, we can defeat him.

There should be no political interference with the general in the field!



The Principles of Sun-tzu from which most of the foregoing are taken were written with extraordinary compression in Chinese style rather than Japanese, and together with the Maxims of Wutzu make up only a very small book; yet whole libraries of commentary have grown from them.

SUN-TZU was the soldier; Wutzu was more the statesman; but there is no conflict of judgment between them, as is so often the case between the civil and military thinking in America today that makes so many of us apprehensive. The Principles of Sun-tzu, which often treat of such details as the care of equipment, apply specifically and pragmatically to the strategy and tactics of war; yet he covers the whole subject under only thirteen headings.

1. Preliminary reckoning.
2. Operations of war.
3. Attack by stratagem.
4. Order of battle.
5. Spirit of the troops.
6. Emptiness and strength.
7. Battle tactics.
8. The nine changes.
9. Movement of troops.
10. Ground.
11. The nine grounds.
12. Assault by fire.
13. Employment of spies.

Of terrible significance is the importance and honor attached to the conduct of spies. To the Oriental, including the Russian, there is nothing ignoble in the career of a spy. On the contrary, spies are worthy of the highest honor and rewards. "The enlightened ruler and wise general who

are distinguished beyond the common," says Sun-tzu, "are informed beforehand. Wonderful indeed is the power of spies. There is no occasion when they cannot be used. The spy is a necessity to the army; upon him the movement of the army depends. Therefore intelligent rulers and wise generals use the cleverest men as spies and invariably acquire great merit."

This certainly should be warning enough for us and justification for thorough alertness to an ever-present danger. It should also be a reminder of our own need for comprehensive intelligence. Sun-tzu reminds us that armies may face each other for years; yet the issue may depend on a single day's victory.

"By grudging slight expense in titles and salaries to spies," says Sun-tzu, "and thus remain in ignorance of the enemy's circumstances is to be without humanity."

That is one for the House Military Affairs Committee to ponder.

It is Wutzu who regarded war from the point of view of Government with considerable attention to the qualities of leadership and the morale of troops. It must constantly be kept in mind that both Sun-tzu and Wutzu were professional men whose attitude toward war was scientific, not emotional. They regarded it dispassionately without desire or thought of personal glory. They had no illusions.

"The cost of supplying the army in distant fields," said Wutzu, "is the



chief drain on the resources of a state. If the war be distant, the citizens are impoverished . . . state funds are exhausted, and frequent levies must be made; the strength of the army is dissipated, money is spent, the citizen's home swept bare; in all seven-tenths of his income is forfeited. As regards state property, chariots are broken, horses worn out, armor and helmet, arrow and bow, spear, shield, pike and fighting tower, wagon and oxen used and gone, so that six-tenths of the Government's income is spent."

No one who considers the budget of a modern nation at war, and substitutes the nomenclature of present-day armor for the ancient weapons, can say this thinking is outmoded!

Suntzu and Wutzu had regard for every contingency of political, economic, social, geographic and climatic conditions that govern the issues of war today as well as in their time. Men have not changed. Changes have only been in the measure of time and space. The mechanized armament of today, inappropriately employed, can still be beaten by inferior armament used with superior understanding. The Japanese found effec-

tive use for fire-crackers in Malaysia and conquered a great modern citadel with inferior forces. The Russian General Timoshenko used horses to break Von Kleist's formidably mechanized army. And what of the situation in Korea where the Chinese Communist army has moved irresistibly against our superior armament, outflanking us with transport that is reported often to include coolies, horses, camels and bullock carts? It is unpleasantly reminiscent of the Tartars' conquest of Hungary, not by "hordes" as is popularly believed, but by light horsemen who rode rings around the ponderous mailed knights.

Frederick the Great is said to have amused himself by laying out a great chess-board on a drill-ground and using grenadiers for chessmen. This was supposed to have been an extraordinary military novelty; but chess originated in China, and there is a legend concerning a game played by Suntzu, similar to that of Frederick the Great's but with one difference of vital significance. The ruler of a kingdom called upon Suntzu to demonstrate his principles in the vicinity of the palace grounds, employing the

ladies of the court as puppets. It happened that the ruler's favorite disobeyed a command: Suntzu promptly ordered her to be executed. When the ruler furiously protested, Suntzu pointed out that he was committing the cardinal error of warfare: *There should be no political interference with the general in the field!*

The Confederate States lost the Civil War largely because they abused this principle; and the Union army almost lost it for the same reason until the conviction was forced on President Lincoln that General Grant should fight his own battles. General Sherman solved the problem by cutting himself off from political communication. No doubt General MacArthur wishes that he could do so today.

You may reasonably assume that Suntzu and Wutzu were not interested in peaceful government because they were professional soldiers. But this is not so. It was this same Suntzu who first said—two thousand five hundred years ago!—"There never has been a country that benefited from prolonged war."

This is a phrase that has been mouthed considerably in recent years, as if it were a discovery of the enlightened Twentieth Century instead of the Fifth Century Before Christ. However, the modern version is a distortion and a historic untruth. Certainly there are countries that have benefited from war. It would be rather fatuous to say Mongolia did not benefit from the conquests of Kublai Khan. There are not many Americans who maintain that the United States did not benefit from the colonial revolution. And the Jews would not be in Palestine today if God Himself, according to the Bible, had not directed them to the conquest of Canaan. The significant difference is in Wutzu's amplification of Suntzu's statement that it is a *prolonged* war that damages a state. He expresses the difference in specific terms:

"Of the fighting races, those who gained five victories have been worn out; those who have won four victories have been impoverished; three victories have given dominion; two victories founded a kingdom; and upon one victory an empire has been established."

There are ghosts over Pearl Harbor and Tokyo who can testify to that hope and to subsequent disaster. Japanese militarism lost patience waiting for a victory that might have come through spies and strategy. Do not think that the Kremlin has failed to consider this!

The Unpremeditated

A STORY OF BLACK MAGIC AND EXTRAORDINARY ROMANTIC ADVENTURE, BY THE MAN WHO WROTE "THE BOOKSHOP."

OF COURSE, if you don't believe in magic, you might as well stop reading this story right now. Because from here on, this is a tale of magic. Universal magic. It could even happen to you. . . .

It all began with the coffee. The coffee was bad—so bad that it gave Arthur Abbott hangovers. The difference between a coffee hangover and one of the more familiar type is that in garnering the Brazilian variety you don't have nearly so much fun the night before. No one really *wants* throbbing temples, or a mouth that tastes like the fringes of a boiled horse-blanket; but if you must endure these discomforts it's better to get them in a café out late than from *café au lait*.

Arthur Abbott realized this. But he didn't seem to be able to do anything about his headaches.

Arthur was a bachelor—which term meant that he did his own cooking.

Which, in turn, meant he was unable to discern any fault in his practice of the culinary art. Being thus myopic, he blamed his bad coffee on every reason but the true one—which was that he always permitted the brown effusion to boil vigorously for any haphazard length of time from five to ten minutes while he was bathing, shaving, dressing, and (all too frequently) soaking his head in cold water in a vain attempt to get rid of the headache caused by *last night's* bedtime cup of caustic lye.

Coffee is not, after all, the *only* mealtime potable. So Arthur Abbott, without loss of face, might have given up the battle. But those same qualities of methodical persistence and dogged determination which held him to his overworked and underpaid post at the Warner Loan Company—a stubbornness that did not permit him to admit defeat in any situation—kept him from taking the coward's way out.

He liked good coffee. He intended to learn how to brew a good cup of coffee or die in the attempt—which alternative was at least an even-money bet.

The morning on which this story properly begins was like countless others in that Arthur woke with a coffee hangover. It was *unlike* others in that he arrived at a decision as to the reason for his chronic headaches. He reached this great conclusion quite by accident, as he was tidying up his kitchen after breakfast. He had just finished washing the dishes when his gaze, by chance, alighted on the dishrag. A mild frown creased his forehead.

"Hmmm!" he said.

He turned and stared at his current coffee-making apparatus. It too utilized a scrap of cloth, a fragment of linen serving as a filter. This strainer-cloth, noted Arthur, was as dingy and stained and unsightly as that with which he had just scrubbed the dishes.

"Mmm-hmm!" murmured Arthur Abbott.

A concept, dazzling in its mathematical perfection, blossomed in his mind. Dishwater was a notoriously unsavory concoction. His coffee tasted like dishwater. Dishwater and coffee had one thing in common; *i.e.*, segments of discolored cloth. Things equal to the same thing equal each other. It was as simple as that.

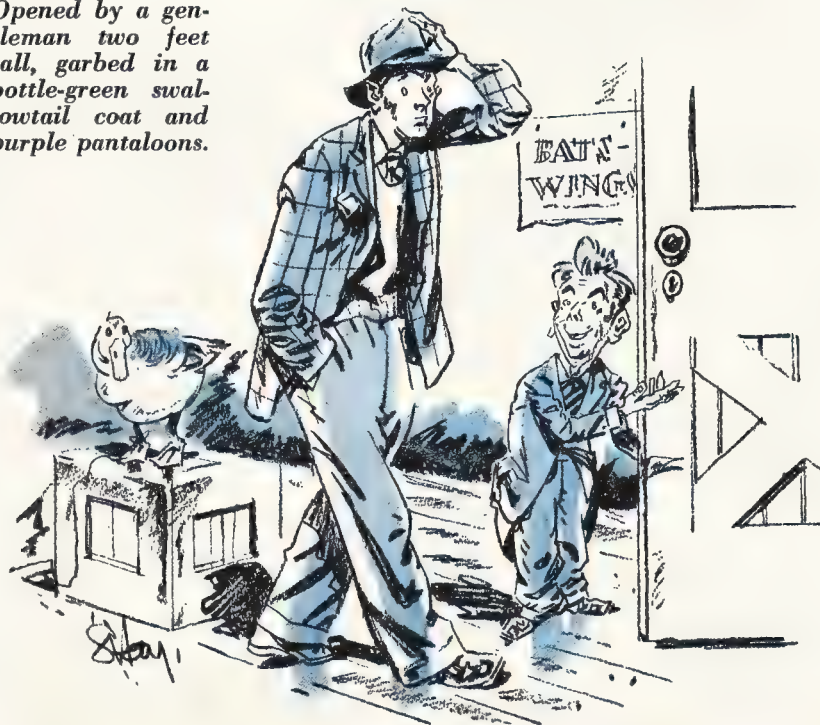
"Filters!" said Arthur Abbott. "That's it! I need fresh filters!"

With singing heart he finished his household chores and set forth for his place of employment. And on the way, he stopped at the only shop open at that early hour of the morning.

It was a curious little shop, upon the windowpane of which appeared the unusual name: ODDS & ENDS, INCORPORATED. The window-well was evidence that the name was not selected without reason. In it were displayed an incredible number of dissimilar objects, a mad mishmash of merchandise piled in a hopeless jumble, ranging in alphabetical heterogeneity from an Abyssinian abacus to a Zulu zither.

As Arthur entered the shop a concealed bell tinkled greeting, and up

Opened by a gentleman two feet tall, garbed in a bottle-green swallowtail coat and purple pantaloons.



Wizard

by NELSON BOND

from behind the counter—as if worked by springs—popped a cheery little man with cheeks the color of ripe cherries.

"Good morning!" cried this chubby little merchant. "Good morning, good morning, good morning, sir! What can I do for *you* this lovely, lovely morning?"

Among other things, decided Arthur with a certain understandable dourness, he could refrain from being so disgustingly happy. It was not *that* good a morning; not by a long shot. In fact, it was a particularly loathsome morning, what with this headache and all.

ARTHUR shrugged and answered. "Filters," he said. "Do you sell filters here?"

"Yes, indeed. Plain or fancy?"

"Eh?" Arthur's wandering gaze had ranged the rows of wares displayed on the shelves and counters of the store. They were even more amazing than the merchandise that littered the window. Broomsticks, candles, incense-burners: all these were items commonplace enough. Less usual—and considerably less comprehensible—were the other surprising objects with which he found himself surrounded. Such things as crystal balls and astrolabes, planchettes and iron caldrons and grinning masks like those worn by African witch-doctors. In an umbrella stand was racked a supply of freshly peeled willow or hazel wands. What might be their purpose, or why anyone in his right mind should want to buy them, Arthur did not know. In a shadowed corner of the shop stood a wicker cage filled with—of all things!—cats. Arthur could see no reason why any place other than a pet shop should stock cats. Especially cats so uniformly black and truculent.

But his not to reason why; his but to brew, or try. He regained his aplomb with some effort.

"Why," he said, "plain, I suppose. I hardly know."

"It all depends on the purpose," smiled the little man who, inexplicably, had drawn from his pocket a small brass telescope, through the wrong end of which he was thought-



"Anything else to-day? Eye of newt or toe of frog?"

fully appraising his customer. Now he collapsed the tube, thrust it into a loam-filled flowerpot, and poured over it a beakerful of some strange milky fluid. "You have some *reason*, of course?"

"Well, in a sense," acknowledged Arthur. "You see, I love co—"

He choked in midsentence. From the pot into which a moment before the telescope had been thrust now was writhing a faint green tendril, a stalk. This sprouted before his eyes, grew leaves, blossomed, and bore a small but perfect rosebud! The proprietor bent over, sniffed this incredible flower appreciatively, plucked and placed it in his coat lapel, then smiled at his startled watcher.

"I see. I don't know who *Kaw* is, but—"

Abruptly he darted to the rear of the strange shop, returned with a handful of paper envelopes. Through these he leafed with brisk intensity.

"Do you know what kind you need?"

Arthur thought ruefully of the many coffee-makers cramming his kitchen shelves. They were of all sizes, shapes and styles; probably no two were identical. And many of them used filters.

"I'm afraid not. But I've got to do *something*. I get these awful head—"

"I see. Assorted, then." The little man's nervous fingers deftly sorted packets into Arthur's outstretched hand. "These are the usual kind. These others are special, for use as noted on the wrappers. You'll be careful, I hope?"

"Careful?" repeated Arthur, who was staring raptly at the remarkable convolutions of a piece of twine the store owner had tossed to the counter. Like a drowsy serpent, this bit of cord had first coiled itself; now it was sinuously unwinding to balance on its nether tip.

"Please be careful!" urged the shopkeeper. "There are certain complications— But of course you understand?"

"Oh, but of course!" gulped Arthur. "Certainly!"

This was a doubtful statement. He knew just one thing certainly—and that was that he wanted out of here. He had experienced many coffee hangovers before, but never one complete with hallucinations. He groped in his pocket.

"How much do I owe you?"

"Oh, that's all right!" disclaimed the store-owner amiably. For reasons known only to himself, he had suddenly donned a conical black hat embellished with the signs of the zodiac. He tapped this headpiece with a silver tuning-fork, and from its volcanic peak began to spiral a spume of spark-flecked, turgid smoke. "Perfectly all right. No charge to fellow craftsmen. Will there be anything else today? Eye of newt or toe of frog? Bats' wings? Perhaps a nice—"

"No, thanks!" gasped Arthur Abbott—and he departed with unseemly speed. He was several blocks away, entering the portals of his own office building, before it occurred to him that he had been mistaken for someone else.



"Why, Mr. Abbott
—what's the matter?
You look awful!"

And also that ODDS & ENDS, INCORPORATED, was a very peculiar shop.

And also that the door of the shop through which he had so precipitately fled had been opened for him by a deferential old gentleman only two feet tall, inexplicably garbed in a bottle-green swallowtail coat and bright purple pantaloons!

FOR once, Arthur was glad that among his many duties was that of opening the office, and that he was, therefore, first to arrive in the morning. He had left home physically disturbed; now he was emotionally ditto. He felt the need of a good, strong lift—such as a cup of coffee might provide. Either that or an examination by a psychiatrist. But Arthur distrusted psychiatrists. He considered that anyone who would go to a psychiatrist should have his head examined.

The Warner Loan Company's ultramodern offices included a small lounge room complete with kitchenette. It was to this last that Arthur betook himself, and hastily set to brewing a pot of his favorite drink. His usual bad luck prevailed. Just as the coffee came to a boil, the telephone rang. By the time Arthur had returned to his unwatched pot, the liquid within it looked like the dregs of a roofer's tar-barrel.

It tasted much the same.

After one shuddering gulp Arthur recalled, somewhat belatedly, his recent acquisitions. Deciding to change the filter on the office coffee-pot right now, he drew the packets from his pocket, opened one—and stared in baffled dismay at its contents.

No filter, this, of cloth or fine mesh paper. The envelope contained an ounce of soft white granulated powder! Puzzled, Arthur looked again at the envelope. On it appeared in a

fine, spidery script the notation: *Standard. For best results, stir into the boiling effusion.*

Arthur pondered briefly; then he shrugged and obeyed the instructions. It was possible, he decided, that this was a new wrinkle in coffee-making technique. Perhaps the powder acted as a catalyst, straining or settling the brew. Arthur knew a woman who always had put eggshells in her coffee. Maybe this was something that worked along the same line.

At any rate, it was worth trying. Anything would be an improvement over his present methods, therefore anything was worth trying. So Arthur dumped the powder into the pot. He had just stirred the augmented potion and poured himself a cup when he heard behind him an ominous, "Grrmmph!"

HE turned to find his employer glaring at him from the doorway.

"Well, Abbott!" growled Horace A. Warner. "Is this what you call getting on the job?"

Arthur stammered, "G-good morning, sir. I—I was just making myself a cup of—"

"Dolt! Idiot! Numskull! I see what you're doing. And it's not what I pay you for. You're supposed to be at your desk at nine o'clock sharp. Do you realize it is now sixty-three seconds past that time?"

"B-but, Mr. Warner, I've been here since—"

"Get," commanded the boss grimly, "to work!"

"Y-yes, sir," said Arthur meekly. He squeezed past his employer, scurried to his desk. His last glance over his shoulder showed Horace A. Warner reaching for the steaming cup Arthur had just poured for himself. . .

Lois glanced up as Arthur slipped into his swivel-chair. Lois was Arthur's secretary. She was also Mr. Warner's secretary. She was also the bookkeeper, file clerk, telephone operator, receptionist, and stenographer of the organization. She was, in brief, the feminine personnel of the Warner Loan Company, just as Arthur was the sum total of male employees.

"Good morning, Mr. Abbott!" she greeted cheerily. "I've finished sorting the mail. Here's a letter from—"

Then a look of concern touched her eyes.

"Why, Mr. Abbott—what's the matter? You look awful!"

ARTHUR said patiently, "One of my headaches, Miss Lane. I was making myself a cup of coffee, but Warner came in and caught me. So I've got to do without, I guess."

The girl bridled.

"Oooh! That old H.A.! He makes me so mad—"

"Please, Miss Lane!" reproved Arthur gently. "He's our employer, you know."

"I know. But the way he treats you! And the way you let him treat you! I don't know why you stand for it. I wish you'd—"

"What?" asked Arthur wanly, as she faltered into outraged silence. "What would you like me to do?"

"A lot of things!" declared Lois, with a thoughtful sidelong glance at her companion-in-bondage. "Maybe some day I'll tell you all of 'em. But one thing for sure—"

"Excuse me," interrupted Arthur. "Client." And he rose, for into the office had just stepped the day's initial visitor—a worried-looking man, as were all who were reduced to entering the web of the Warner Loan Company.

Arthur stepped forward to meet the newcomer. But a step too late, for the boss had emerged from the kitchenette, and it was he who moved in on the hapless client, face alight with crocodile cordiality.

Arthur sighed and sat down again. A tender-hearted soul, it always grieved him to see a client fall into Horace Warner's clutches. Had he—Abbott—waited on this man, the poor fellow might have succeeded in paying off his obligation a day or two before Gabriel tooted his trumpet. But with H. A. handling the affair—Arthur shook his head. The visitor had come in for a business loan. He would probably get the loan. He would definitely get the business!

Lois Lane, who knew what he was thinking, reached forth impulsively and touched his hand. It was an odd fact that for some reason or another Lois frequently contrived to touch Arthur's hand gently. It was an even

odder fact that for some reason or another Arthur had never noticed this.

"Too bad!" she whispered softly. "But never mind. Maybe he's got a rich uncle who'll die and—"

Then she stopped abruptly, and Arthur stiffened in sudden astonishment, because from across the room the voice of their employer lifted in unbelievable words.

"Three hundred? But of course, my dear sir! We'll be delighted to advance you the money. Are you sure that's enough? How about five hundred?"

Arthur stared at the gasping girl, then at Warner, incredulously. Warner *never* acceded to a first request. It was his custom to beat his clients down to half their original demand, then compute the interest rate on the amount first mentioned.

There was a mumble from the visitor, then Warner's voice again:

"No, no, sir—I *insist* you take five hundred! In the present emergency you'll need all you can lay your hands on. Oh, Mr. Abbott—"

"Yes sir?" managed Arthur.

"Please make out a check to this gentleman for five hundred dollars, and record the loan on our books."

"Yes sir. And the—the interest rate?"

"Interest rate? Oh, tush! No interest. He only wants the money for a few months."

THE floor rocked beneath Arthur's feet. As from a vast distance he heard Lois' frightened whimper: "Mr. Abbott, *quick!* What's the telephone number of Bellevue?" Then, as the world continued to spin in giddy circles, again came the voice of Warner: "Well, Abbott? Let's not keep the gentleman waiting all day!"

Insane or not, the boss had issued an order. Arthur sprang into action. He leaped forward with checkbook and ledger. A few minutes later a dazed but happy client was walking from the office, the loan company's check for five hundred in his wallet.

Warner gazed after him, beaming fatuously.

"A fine chap, that. Lovely fellow! Like to have a man like him for a friend. A dear, dear friend."

Then his turning gaze lighted on Arthur; his smile faded.

"Well, Abbott? What are you standing there gaping for? Get to work, you slack-jawed idiot!"

"Y-yes, sir!" gulped Arthur, and tottered back to his desk. With some surprise he discovered that his mouth *was* open. With some difficulty, he closed it. But for half an hour thereafter, it kept dropping open again. . .

By ten o'clock, activity in the office had settled down to a semblance of normality. Three more customers had

come and gone. Arthur had attended two of these and approved their loan requests at the Warner Loan Company's usual (*i.e.*, maximum legal) interest rates. Warner had served the other, turning him loose with half the amount he had asked for, and a life-sentence to penury.

Within the hour, Warner had barked four times at Arthur, and sworn at him twice. He had thrice criticized Lois for doing things he had yesterday told her to do, while six times he had criticized her for *not* doing things he had forgotten to tell her. At odd moments he had complained about (a) the weather, (b) the high cost of living, (c) incompetent help, and (d) the Federal Government. In between times, he had waged violent telephonic warfare with an assortment of victims ranging from the janitor to the head of a rival concern. He had threatened nine persons with lawsuits, and challenged one to a duel. It was, for him, a placid ante-meridian.

But at ten o'clock the door opened, and in strolled the two persons in the world whom Warner dared not bulldoze. They were Mrs. Horace A. Warner and Miss Janice Warner. The first-named of this duo was built on the general lines of an aircraft carrier: deep of keel, wide of beam, and equipped with a voluminous landing-deck. Her daughter was a lighter craft—a torpedo-boat, perhaps—lithe, gracefully mobile, and dangerous.

To the discerning eye, there was a vague resemblance between these two. A connoisseur of womankind, viewing

Within the hour Warner had waged violent telephonic warfare with an assortment of victims.

them together, might have predicted the coming day when Miss Janice would look too grimly like her mother. But Arthur Abbott was no expert in such matters. All he knew was that whenever he saw Warner's daughter his heart went *pitty-pat*, and weird things happened to his basal metabolism.

As now: Right now he was simultaneously hot and cold, mute and voluble, shy and excited. He rose eagerly to greet the pair, and with a strangled effort gargled phrases intended to convey his pleasure.

"Good morning, Mrs. Warner. Miss Warner—I'm glad to see you. Is there something—"

Miss Warner dismissed him with a frosty nod. Her mother's words were of the same temperature.

"Where," demanded the head of the Warner household, "is he?"

"In his private office. If you'll be seated, I'll tell him you're here. He—"

With a sniff and a snort and a swish the aircraft carrier brushed by him. The torpedo-boat followed in a smooth, gliding maneuver that left poor Arthur wallowing in its wake, utterly submerged in waves of hopeless yearning and *Toujours l'Amour*. Eyes glowing like stars, he floated back to his desk, where Lois stood glowering at him petulantly.

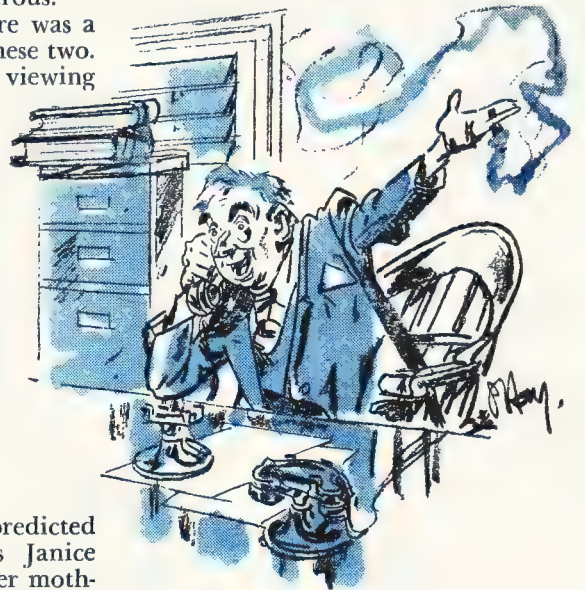
"Do we," she demanded caustically, "go on with our dictation? Or do we take time out to pluck petals off daisies?"

"Eh?"

"She loves me," sneered Lois, "she loves me not." So *that's* why you continue to work in this moth-eaten modern version of a Carthaginian galley? Because that—that padded blonde is his daughter?"

Arthur shuddered at the blasphemy.

"Miss Lane—*really!* You have no reason to say such things about Miss Janice. She is a lovely, sweet, and gentle creature. Furthermore, she's not—er—"



"She is, too! It sticks out all over her! Oh—you men! Of all the stupid, blind, ignorant—"

Arthur scarcely heard her irate ranting. From within the chief's office came the muted clink of china. A smile touched his lips, and he sighed.

"Listen—they're drinking the coffee. My coffee! *She* is drinking a cup of the coffee I brewed myself!"

"With your own dainty lily-white hands? Oh, goody! Maybe after you're married she'll let you make her a platter of nice gooey fudge—to match that icky look on your face!"

"Married!" Arthur crimsoned hotly. "My dear Miss Lane, aren't you leaping to conclusions? I'm sure Miss Warner has never dreamed of marrying me."

"Oh? And are you equally sure you've never dreamed of— Oh, you *have*, have you? Never mind trying to hide that guilty look! Well, how about it? Was I right? Is she padded, or isn't she?"

"Miss Lane," said Arthur with great dignity, "you should be ashamed of yourself. Such thoughts, such words, ill befit the lips of a modest young lady. I'd thank you to—"

"I'm *not* a modest young lady! And I'm darn sick of trying to pretend I am. I'm a full-grown, healthy, normally developed young wench, sound of body and limb! I don't have to drown myself in gallons of ten-dollar-a-dram come-hither to make myself attractive, and I don't have to wear a lot of slinky Mainbocher gowns to show off a figure I bought at the dry-goods counter, and I don't dye my hair, and I—I—I can get all the men I want, anyway, and I wouldn't have you if you were the last man on earth, and I hope she *does* marry you, and you'll be sorry, so *there*, Mr. Starry-eyed Abbott!"

"But—" said Arthur dazedly.

"And I've been a doggone fool long enough, sticking around this dirty

"Quite so!" said a new voice.

old clip-joint working my fingernails off in the hope that some day you'd notice there was something behind my typewriter besides dust, and you're just a simpering, stuffy, meeky-mousey *sample* of a man, anyway, and I'm sorry I ever looked twice at you!"

"But—" said Arthur.

"And I'm getting out of here right now, and I don't care if you get down on your hands and knees and *beg* me to stay, because I'm not going to do it. And if I never see you again in my life, Mr. Coffee-I-Brewed-Myself Abbott, it will be too soon!"

"But—"

"Good-by!" said Lois Lane.

The door slammed.

It opened again immediately. Lois stuck her head in. Abbott noticed with stunned concern that she was crying.

"Forever!" she yelled.

And the door slammed again. Violently.

"Well!" said Arthur Abbott. Then, recognizing that under the circumstances the expletive seemed hardly expressive enough: "Well, *really*!" he elaborated.

HE was experiencing emotions which were utterly chaotic. There was a sort of tingling which he tentatively identified as pleasure. After all, it is not every day that a man—especially an Arthur Abbott—learns that he is the object of a lovely girl's affections. And it dawned on Arthur belatedly that Lois *was* a lovely girl. Immodestly outspoken as might have been her self-appraisal, it was accurate. Moreover, it was illuminating. And interesting.

Arthur was not quite sure what he should do. Mixed with his exhilaration was a goodly amount of doubt, uncertainty, and outright fear. He could, of course, follow Lois. But if he did so, and caught up with her—what could he honestly say? That he loved her? Or even liked her deeply? No man who has steadfastly fixed his eyes on one star for months can suddenly transfer his interest to another. And there was no doubt that Janice Warner was the shining star of Arthur's life. A golden star, bright and alluring, hopelessly beyond reach.

Which was an excellent reason for shifting his field of interest to Lois. She was not, by her own admission, half so inaccessible.

"Still," mused Arthur, scarcely realizing he spoke aloud, "if there were any chance of winning her—"

Then a swift chill touched his spine, tingled up his backbone, and stirred horripilations on the nape of his neck. For suddenly there was a cool, soft hand on his forehead, and a voice which—until this moment—

had only in his dreams been so sweetly intimate, asked:

"Of winning whom, Arthur dear?"

He rose and turned slowly, fearfully.

It was not hallucination. It was Janice!

Arthur took a deep breath, squeaked an incoherent syllable, took a second deep breath and bleated, "Did—did you call me *dear*?"

"I did," answered the girl smoothly. "You *are* my dear, aren't you?"

"But—" gulped Arthur. "But—but—but—"

"That is," amended the girl, "when you're not playing motorboat?"

"B-but, Miss Warner—"

"Janice," breathed the angel of the same name. "My darling, let me hear you speak my name."

"But, Janice—I didn't think you'd ever *noticed* me. I mean, I've loved you for months and months, but you've never looked at me, spoken to me—"

"Oh, that!" said Janice. "What do we care about a little thing like that?" Nevertheless, a small frown creased her perfect forehead. Arthur thought, and instantly reproved himself for entertaining the thought, that for an instant she looked amazingly like her mother. "Now that we've finally discovered how we feel about each other— Kiss me, darling!" she demanded suddenly.

"Er—here?" asked Arthur feebly.

"What better place?"

"N-now?"

"Why wait?"

"Well—" said Arthur. He took her into his arms. He hadn't far to reach. He lost himself in the depths of an electric shock—a tingly, mingly, Technicolor electric shock that culminated in a blasting roar from not too far away.

"Abbott! Janice! What's going on here?"

DREAMLAND faded suddenly, and the land of nightmares took its place. Arthur disengaged himself and turned to face his employer. In a curiously detached mood he noted that Warner's face was an unusually vivid shade of lavender.

"Oh, hello, Mr. Warner," he said. "I've got a surprise for you. Janice and I—"

"And I've got a surprise for *you*!" roared the boss. "You're fired—effective as of week before last. Your two weeks are up, and you've overstayed your leave! Now, get out of here!"

"Father," said Janice coolly, "you're being ridiculous!"

"Eh? I am nothing of the sort. I'm—"

"You're exactly what she said," assented Mrs. Warner, entering from



the kitchenette. "What did she say? Oh, *now* I see! This young man with the lipstick on his nose, eh? Well, Janice, darling—I must admit you have good taste."

"Good taste!" bellowed H.A. "You mean you approve of her smooching with this—this junior clerk in my office?"

"But of course," giggled Mrs. Warner. "If I weren't old enough to be his mother, I could go for him myself. Your name is Arthur, isn't it, young man?"

"Y-yes, Mrs. Warner."

"You may call me Agnes. Now, Horace—as for Arty being a junior clerk, I'm sure we can easily fix *that*."

"I've already fixed it," commented Warner sourly. "He's now eligible for unemployment compensation."

"Your mistake, Horace. I'm hiring him again."

"You!"

"Precisely. I am the treasurer of this organization, am I not?"

"No! I mean—well, yes. But that was solely for the purpose of incorporating. Your title, and the one held by Janice, are purely fictitious—"

"I'm sure the income-tax authorities would love to know that," said Agnes Warner archly. "Come, Horace, be reasonable. Would you rather have Arty as your executive vice-president or"—and her jaw hardened—"would you like to spend six months in the clink?"

"Well, I—I—" Horace Warner knew when he was licked. He nodded meekly. "Very well, my dear. Arty—er, that is, Arthur—shall be my executive vice-president. But as for his marrying Janice—"

"Oh, don't rush things, Daddy," giggled erstwhile cool and aloof Janice. "There's no hurry. Next week will be time enough."

ARTHUR heard this conversation as through the folds of a soft, woolly blanket. To him the events of the past fifteen minutes were one big baffling mass of confusion. It is true his heart was pounding with excitement. But something else was pounding, too. His head. More than ever before in his life he needed something to clear the fuzz from his brain. Coffee! The cup in Agnes Warner's hand reminded him of coffee. He went to the kitchenette.

But there disappointment met him. The pot he had brewed was gone—all gone. As swiftly as he could, Arthur prepared a fresh one. As it brewed, he remembered his powder filters, took them from his pocket. Most of them were labeled *Standard*, like the one he had first used. But there must be others. The shopkeeper had said this was an assortment.

Illustrated by Stuart Hay



"Good-by! Forever!" she yelled.
And the door slammed.

He found the one he wanted. It bore the inscription: *Special. To Clear the Brain*. This must be the one the dealer had given him for his headaches. Arthur dusted the powder into the boiling pot.

A moment later the coffee was ready. Arthur poured himself a full, steaming cup, sipped it. It tasted good. He took another sip. And another. And then. . .

Then suddenly his headache was gone—vanished completely, as if by magic. And in its place was a strange new sensation utterly unlike anything he had ever experienced before. A feeling of confidence, of knowledge and power, of understanding. A magnificent clarity of thought.

He took one step toward the outer office, then cried aloud, abruptly, "Wilkinson!"

"Eh?" gasped H. A. Warner, appearing in the doorway.

"Wilkinson! You've been trying to remember the name of that man who witnessed the Southern Realty Corporation contract. That's it!"

"By Jove, you're right!" exclaimed Warner. "Good for you, Arthur. Maybe you're not as big a dope as I thought you were. Now we can get that judgment against Southern."

"Boiled!" shouted Arthur, his brain still seething with that strange new intelligence. "That's the trouble!"

"With you?"

"With my coffee. In the past I've always boiled it too long. That's why I got those headaches. Now that I've discovered the reason—"

"Darling, whatever is the matter?" demanded Janice anxiously, giving

way before him as he strode into the outer office. "You're talking so wildly. Really, my sweet—"

"Don't!" roared Arthur. "Don't call me your sweet. Shouldn't marry, you and I. Big mistake. Incompatible."

"What? But, Arthur, darling—"

"Wouldn't work out. Wouldn't work out at all. Infatuation. Divorce in six months. All a mistake. All the result of—"

He stopped, confused. Agnes Warner asked, "Yes?"

"Filters?" said Arthur in a puzzled tone. "Seems like the answer is filters. But *that* can't be right. What could filters—" He snapped his fingers, a light dawning in his eyes. "Great guns! Of course!"

"Of course *what*?"

"Philtres!"

"But that's what you said before, sweetheart."

"No. Same sound, different spelling. I asked him for *filters*—with an *f*. He gave me the other kind—with a *p-h*. Clear case of mistaken identity. Probably thought I was a fellow magician, or warlock, or wizard, or whatever he is. Those powders are *magic*!"

"Quite so!" acknowledged a new voice. "So you've discovered that?"

INTO the office sauntered the little gnome who had waited on Arthur at ODDS & ENDS, INCORPORATED. He was wearing a long black garment with mammoth pockets, and a comic-opera hat.

"I just learned you were the wrong person," said he apologetically. "I

came as soon as I could. May I have the philtres back?"

"Back? Do you think I'm crazy?" demanded Arthur.

"No. Not necessarily. Not unless you insist on keeping them. They really won't do you any good, you know. The results aren't lasting."

"They're not?"

"Oh, goodness, no!" The small man smiled amiably. "I know this girl now thinks she's in love with you. And her mother also thinks you're wonderful. But that's just because you were the first person they saw after they drank the love potion. I don't know who *he* saw," he added, staring dubiously at Warner.

"Wonderful chap!" murmured Horace A. Warner. "Delightful fellow. Must call him tomorrow and see if he needs another five hundred. Didn't lend him enough."

The shopkeeper smiled faintly and shrugged. To Arthur he said, "Tomorrow he'll probably try to have the man arrested for obtaining money under false pretenses. Because, as I told you, the effects aren't lasting. So if you'll be kind enough to return the powders to me—"

"Then my love affair," groaned Arthur, "is just a magic spell? And my promotion to vice-president—"

"Well, you had already figured the love affair for yourself before I got here. As for the promotion—that's up to Warner. Personally, I think it was a good idea."

HORACE WARNER said reluctantly: "Well, it might not be a bad idea at that. Arthur *does* know the business almost as well as I do. And I'm getting on in years. I'd enjoy the opportunity to get away from the office more often. For golf, and all that sort of thing. If he'll guarantee not to marry my daughter—"

"Father!" wailed Janice. "What are you saying? I love Arthur. Adore him! I can't live without him!"

Arthur looked at the little man appealingly.

The shopkeeper smiled and cocked an eyebrow.

"Give her a sip of your coffee. The brain-clearing brew," he suggested.

Arthur did so. After a pause:

"Well?" queried the little man. "How about it? Do you still want to marry him?"

Janice eyed Arthur wistfully. Then somewhat more thoughtfully. She said, "We-e-ell—"

"Have another sip," suggested the shopkeeper.

Arthur said, "If you want to go through with it, I will. I think it's a mistake, but I don't want to break your heart—"

"Break my heart!" sniffed Janice Warner indignantly. "Good gracious!

I hope you don't think I *meant* all those absurd things I was saying a few minutes ago? Don't you know a joke when you hear one? Marry you, indeed! Do you think I'd marry an employee in my father's office?"

Agnes Warner glanced regretfully from her daughter to her briefly-intended son-in-law. Then, being an eminently sensible woman:

"Arty, dear," she sighed, "let *me* have a sip of your coffee, too, will you? I *still* think you're wonderful!"

Arthur smiled—not without a small pang of regret—and passed her the cup that cleared. He said wistfully, "It's all for the best, I suppose. You may have the philtres back. But it *is* disappointing to lose the love of people who seemed to—"

Then suddenly remembrance struck him.

"Lois!" he cried. "*She* didn't drink any coffee!"

"Lois?" queried the shopkeeper.

"My secretary. A slim, dark-haired girl. A lovely girl. A *beautiful* girl," explained Arthur, warming to his description.

"Oh, yes! She must be the one I saw in the hallway as I entered. I suppose she's still there. She—"

That was all Arthur heard. In three swift strides he was across the room, through the doorway, into the outer hall. Miraculously, Lois was still there.

Arthur said, "Lois—"

"Go away!" came the muffled answer from the huddled figure by the window.

"Lois, darling!"

"Go—" began the girl, then stopped.

"Lois *what*?" she faltered.

"Lois, darling," said Arthur firmly, "I've been an idiot. A blind, foolish idiot. If you'll give me a chance to prove I've come to my senses—"

"You've got another headache," declared the girl. "A bad one. You're talking wildly again."

"It's not a headache. It's a heart-ache. Oh, Lois, my dear—"

"I—I can make good coffee," ventured Lois. "If that's any recommendation—"

THEN Arthur was lifting the head of the one woman in the world who did not need a magic potion to make her love him . . . was gazing into the eyes of a girl who momentarily blossomed with new beauty as her lips raised to his . . . was feeling for the first time the warmth and pressure of her soft arms about his neck. . . .

Of course, if you don't believe in magic, you might as well stop reading this story right now. Because from here on, this is a tale of magic. Universal magic. It could even happen to you.

If you're lucky.

THE END

Wanted:

Modern travel conditions have reduced the great dog's usefulness. Will he find a new chance in Tibet?

P ROWLING alone through a snow-filled pass in the mountains, the young dog was suddenly drawn by an inexplicable sense toward a small, almost invisible mound in the dazzling white expanse. Cautiously he sniffed, then began to dig urgently. Buried in the snow, sleeping the heavy sleep of near-death, lay a little ten-year-old girl, lost by an ill-starred party of travelers in a storm the night before.

Unhesitatingly the great dog lay down beside her, licking her face with his warm tongue until she revived. Sensing with uncanny wisdom that if he left to get help—as he had been trained to do—the weakened child would not survive, the dog somehow managed to place her on his back and muster up the super-canine strength to carry her to safety.

So began the fabulous career of *Barry der Menschenretter*—the Savior of Man—credited in his day with the saving of forty human lives. Barry was the world's first famous St. Bernard. For many years after his death the great gentle dogs of his breed were called, not St. Bernards, but "Barry Hounds." An inscription on his memorial tells of his murder by a man who was to have been his forty-first rescue—a soldier who mistook his benefactor for a beast of prey, and stabbed him with a hunting-knife. Actually, Barry lived to the ripe old age of fourteen years and finally died in Berne, Switzerland, where his likeness stands today in the Museum of Natural History.

Barry's home, and the source of all St. Bernards, is the Great St. Bernard Pass high up in the Swiss Alps. A treacherous route stretching fifty-three miles across the Alps from the village of Martigny in Switzerland to Aosta, Italy, the pass is covered for at least nine months of the year with snow that often reaches a depth of more than fifteen feet. Below-zero temperatures, frequent sudden snowstorms, perilous snow-disguised precipices and avalanches add to the dangers of travel. But toward the middle of the pass stands the Great St. Bernard Hospice, offering food and shelter to

Job for Experienced St. Bernard!

by IB MELCHIOR
and WILL SPARKS



the weary traveler, and seeking out those lost along the way.

No member of the animal kingdom is surrounded with more heroic and romantic legends than the friendly giant dog who works alongside the monks of the hospice. His instinct for rescue work is one of nature's most fascinating mysteries. In their three hundred years of existence the St. Bernards have saved nearly three thousand persons from death in the perilous pass.

Most people are surprised to learn that despite their famed instinct the dogs undergo a rigorous training be-

fore they are allowed to wander about the Alpine pass. For their work to be effective, they must be schooled in awakening and reviving victims, moving them without injuring them, and summoning help from the hospice. Above all, they must learn teamwork.

The monks take the young pupils, along with some of the experienced dogs from whose example the trainees learn, out into the mountains where there is always snow. One of the monks will separate himself from the group, lie down and cover himself with snow, and the dogs are sent out to find him.

On actual rescue missions the dogs work in packs of four. When a victim is found, he is first dug out of the snow. Then two of the dogs lie down beside him to warm his body. A third licks his face to revive him. The fourth dog rushes back to the hospice to summon help. It is only the fourth dog who carries that famous little cask around his neck, fastened on after the dog reports back to the hospice. The monks want it clearly understood that the dogs never wander about the mountains by themselves carrying brandy.

THE casks are made of oak staves and bound with brass hoops, and they hold a pint and a half. For fifty years these little barrels were absent from the heavy St. Bernard necks. But in the last year so many persons lost themselves in the Alps that the monks decided to restore the liquor casks. But it isn't brandy they carry. It's *marc*, a distillation of grapeskins made by the monks.

If a lone dog chances upon someone in the snow, his first duty is to revive him. Then, if the victim is able to walk, the dog leads him to the hospice. If not, the dog barks to call aid. If out of earshot, he tries to drag the victim to where the barking will be heard.

Only a few weeks ago a party of Italians seeking jobs in France attempted to negotiate the pass. They underestimated the rigors of the crossing and were hopelessly stranded. When the monks arrived with stimulants, in response to an insistent summons from the dogs, all thirty of the men were in bad condition. They can thank the faithful dogs that they are alive today.



*When a victim is found,
two of the dogs lie down
beside him to warm his
body.*

No visitor to the famous hospice has ever met with hostility from the even-tempered dogs—none that is, except Elysabethe Dalrymple.

When Elysabethe walked into the courtyard a few years ago, her arrival brought all of the rescue dogs, young and old, rushing toward her furiously, with howls of suspicion and protest. The monks were able to calm their charges before any harm was done, and they are inclined to forgive this one instance of strange, unorthodox behavior. Nothing like her, they point out, had been seen in the Alps for over two thousand years; and the dogs wanted, quite understandably, to discover which end of her was which. Elysabethe Dalrymple was an elephant.

When Hannibal, great general from ancient Carthage, was at war with mighty Rome, he led his army from Africa to Spain, then across France and over the Alps through the Great St. Bernard Pass, chosen because it was so dangerous the Romans left it unguarded. With Hannibal went a herd of three dozen elephants, on the backs of which rode majestic Carthaginian officers.

More than two thousand years later, in 1935, adventurer Richard Halliburton retraced Hannibal's route with an elephant of his own, Elysabethe Dalrymple—Dally for short. Like all travelers, this unique pair was given food and lodging at the Hospice, to the grand amusement of monks and dogs alike.

THE Hospice was founded in the middle of the Tenth Century by Bernard de Menthon, an Italian monk who ventured into the pass after hearing stories of highwaymen who robbed Rome-bound pilgrims along the way and held back every tenth man in slavery. The valiant Bernard went into the perilous mountains with a small band of courageous men, taking the fateful tenth position for himself. The little group proceeded, chanting Christian hymns and songs, when suddenly they were set upon by the bandits. Bravely, with invincible faith, Bernard held forth his crucifix, and as by a miracle the robbers became terror-stricken and fled. Falling to his knees and thanking God, the monk vowed to set up a hospice on that very spot to succor all who traveled the pass. Today an impressive monument to Bernard de Menthon overlooks this settlement in the pass which bears his name.

At first the monks, members of the Order of St. Augustine, worked alone in their dangerous task of mercy. Each morning they diligently searched the pass for travelers who might have become lost during the night; and finding them, they brought them to



The St. Bernards have saved nearly three thousand persons from death.

the hospice for help and care. To break the monotony, the monks fell into the habit of taking with them the dogs from the valley below, and they soon discovered the uncanny ability of these animals to find people lost and buried in the snow. From then on the dogs played an important and permanent part in the famed rescue work of the hospice. These first dogs belonged to a common local breed known as *Thalhund*, or Dog of the Valley.

It was not until 1865 that the dogs, whose extraordinary exploits then were told in the four corners of the earth, became commonly known as St. Bernards.

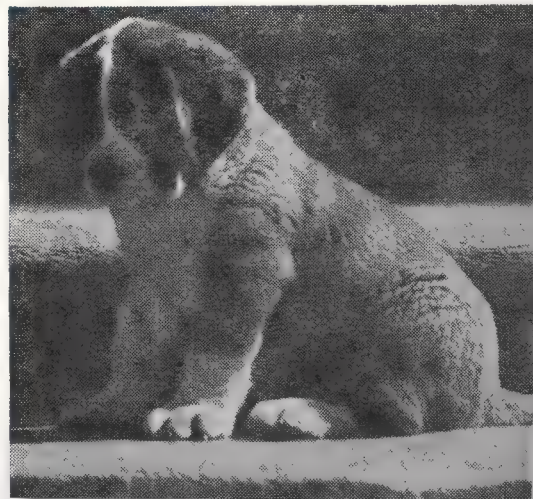
Modern innovations have eased the burden of travel across the pass, diminishing the usefulness of both hospice and dogs. Autos have shortened the length of time it takes to cross the pass, and radio and telephone communications at either end keep the monks posted on the number of people *en route*. If a modern traveler hasn't turned up at the hospice within a given length of time, searching parties and the dogs are sent out.

Until 1924 the St. Bernard Hospice was supported by gifts left in the almsbox by those who stopped. But charity was not what it might have been, and in that year the monks were forced to place a small charge upon their hospitality; but even now the poor may still enjoy it gratis. Since the war the famous old hospice has found itself in financial straits. This despite the fact that summer traffic on the Great St. Bernard Pass has become so heavy that a special traffic officer is

needed. Unable to extend their hospitality to such a great number of guests, the monks have converted a wing of one of the buildings into a hotel, and now cater to tourists.

IN 1930 the monks began casting about for a more remote place where they and their dogs might continue their historic charity. Eventually they made a branch settlement on the Li La Pass in Tibet, 13,780 feet up in the Himalaya Mountains. There they appear to have escaped, for a time, the inexorable march of technology. Recently, however, there has arisen still a new threat. From China comes news that the Communist Army has set the "liberation" of Tibet as one of its goals for 1951. Should this occur, the monks and their gentle unwarlike dogs may again find themselves in search of a job.

But if they can escape wars, telephones and the automobile, Tibetan St. Bernards may establish an Oriental strain to rival the deeds of their Western cousins.



Flame across the

SWEDE signaled, and the big FWD growled deep in its throat. The winch line tightened. I watched the shining heavy length of stranded copper wriggle straight, and inch itself up from the asphalt of the residential street. At the corner beyond, I saw our flagman wave a sedan to a stop. Funny how a side-street becomes an important highway the minute a line crew starts stringing wire across it.

I glanced back to check on old Foggy. He was in his appointed place, all right, but he was in trouble. He was flapping his red muslin at a little convertible drifting blithely down the hill toward the job. He waved harder, but it rolled past Foggy unchecked. I yelled, and dived toward the center of the street.

The girl saw me and dynamited the brakes. Tires squalled on the blacktop. A fender caught my hip, sent me sprawling toward the gutter. . . . Rough gravel bit into my palms; pain hummed in my trick shoulder. I came up fighting mad.

"Are—are you hurt?" the girl's voice quavered. She was out of the car, running toward me. I breathed deep, trying to control my temper. She was young, trim and blonde. Now her blue eyes were dilated by shock, the light gold of her tan sallow from fright. "Are you hurt?" she repeated.

Foggy had come over, concern in his rheumy old eyes. Ineffectually he tried to brush the dirt off my shirt. "I'm all right, Foggy," I told him, pushing him away. I rubbed my skinned palms across my shirt front.

"If I'm not hurt, it's no thanks to you, baby," I told her. "I've heard tell a blind person could get a driver's license in Montana. I'm beginning to believe it. Why did you think Foggy was waving that red flag?"

Color was coming back into her cheeks, but her hands were shaking. Nervously she smoothed down her hair. "I'm sorry," she said with a wavering smile. "I'm so glad you aren't hurt. Honestly, I didn't see the flagman. I—I must have been thinking about my new job." The smile steadied, warm and friendly. Her eyes pleaded for forgiveness.

Almost, I melted. Then it came to me. My ebbing anger surged back. This was the traffic-ticket smile, the

little-girl-who-made-a-mistake smile. Lord knows how many times it had rescued her from jams in the past.

Disgusted, I took a step forward and seized her slim wrist. I towed her, protesting, the few paces to the crossing span. Releasing her, I pointed to the span wire, hanging head-high and deadly across the traffic lane.

"Take a look at that, sister," I told her. "That's one-ought copper. At twenty-five miles an hour, that wire would have caught you just under the chin. You would have, quite literally, lost your head. Your shiny little car would be all bloody, and the morgue wagon would have picked you up in two pieces!"

Her face had paled again. She started to speak. I stopped her. "Furthermore, I had two linemen up that pole. They were working within a few feet of a live seventy-two-hundred-volt lead. You might have killed both of them. Pretty blondes are a dime a dozen, but Northern Hydro can't replace two good men."

I'd poured it on too heavy. She was angry, her eyes blazed. "That's enough!" she flared. "I had it coming; I was in the wrong. I'm sorry as anyone can be that it happened, and glad that it was no worse. But I'm not taking any more. Just who are you?"

"Terry Norton, ma'am," I said with mock politeness. "City Foreman for the Corinth area of Northern Hydro. Please excuse me, ma'am, I'm just a roughneck ex-lineman without no polish. Next time, I must remember not to interfere when a lady wants to knock off herself and a couple of innocent bystanders."

I didn't have time to duck. Her palm spat hard across my face. I stood there feeling like a fool. A guffaw pealed from the line crew standing by the truck, but I just

gawked as the girl marched back to her car, indignation in the stubborn set of her shoulders. She started the convertible, backed around the corner, and shot down a cross-street without a backward glance.

I had to make the best of it. At that, my grin wasn't entirely forced when I limped over to the chuckling, jeering crew.

"She's got plenty temper, eh, Terry?" commented Swede Dahlstrom, the foreman.

"Yeah, and a right like Louis," I agreed, rubbing my smarting cheek. "All right, Swede—show's over. Let's get this span up before she comes back with her brothers."

I WAS sitting in my little office in Corinth's combination substation and shop a few days later, when Sam Velie, the Division Super, called me. I got into my red-and-gold company coupé and headed downtown, wondering what was up. Velie was a pretty swell joe, but any call from the brass hinted at trouble.

It was this way: I'd started with Northern Hydro as a dumb orphan kid of seventeen, grunting on a line crew. Linemen are an ungente breed, but I managed to stick it out. By the time I was twenty-one, I was wearing the hooks myself, making good money. I got to be pretty catty on a pole, and in three years I was rodding a light-maintenance crew. I considered myself a rugged specimen, and an authority on linework. Consequently I was only tolerant of the engineers and supervisors who, in my opinion, cluttered up Northern Hydro's operations.

It took old Dave Grey to snap me out of it. Dave had been city foreman at Corinth since the days when they rated transformers in watts. I was transferred to Corinth and tangled with Dave immediately. It didn't pay. In a month I found myself without friends, reputation or prospects. It ended one night when Dave and I went alone into the basement of the Sub and had it out. I won't say what happened; but Dave, in his middle fifties, was still one hell of a man.

It was Dave who made me start studying. He threatened and cajoled me into taking an electrical course, then applied his sarcastic tongue every

A story of high hazard when
storm brought down the hot
wires.

by **ROBERT
J. McCAIG**

Night

time I slowed down. By the time the war came along, I was in the good books of the company, and becoming a pretty fair electrical man. The company let me jump my deferment to join the Seabees. I came back with a bad shoulder from a sniper's bullet on Guam, an expanded knowledge of construction, and a determination to get somewhere with Northern Hydro.

Again Dave Grey went to bat for me. He was slowing down, worn by the nerve strain and long hours of the war period. At Dave's request, Sam Velie put me on as Dave's assistant. For nearly a year I had the benefit of Dave's wise old head. When Dave crumpled and died one night in the middle of a wild storm job, Velie gave me a chance at the job. I took it.

I was just getting by. I knew the work, and I could handle the line crews. I'd been around these skilled, temperamental prima-donnas all my life. But now my job included dealing with the public, and I was no diplomat. Twice, recently, Velie had called me on the carpet and laid down the law. Was I in bad again?

SAM VELIE's grizzled head was bent over a stack of papers as I walked into his office in the Electric Building. He looked up, and there was no smile on his heavy face. He shoved the papers aside. "Sit down, Terry," he said. I faced him across the table. He leaned back in his chair with a gesture of impatience.

"Terry, I don't know what we're going to do with you," he began, shaking his head. "One day you bull through some impossible job, and we're proud of you. The next, you tangle with one of the customers, and get in such a jam we feel like tying a can on you. Why do you do it?"

"What's the beef this time, Chief?" I asked, crossing my fingers.

"United Metals. You know damn well they've been considering putting in their own power plant on the sayso of Jack Kinner, that young engineer they picked up. Kinner's figures are cockeyed, but he's selling them on the idea. Yet you go out there, tangle with Kinner, and make our position even worse!"

"You know the score on that, Sam," I protested. "He won't leave our equipment alone. The oil switch



Lorain was limp and leaden in my arms.

kicked out on the U.M. Sub. Kinner closed it back without orders and blew a transformer bushing to pieces, and we had a four-hour overtime job. I told him *not* to operate anything on our sub without orders from us."

"Fine—except that you added that you would ram a switch stick three feet down his throat the next time he touched anything! Then you stormed into the office of the plant manager and informed him that if that so-and-so didn't leave our stuff alone, you would personally see that United Metals needed a new electrical engineer!"

I started to defend myself, but Sam was still hot. Out of the corner of my

eye I saw a feminine figure standing hesitantly in the doorway. Velie didn't notice her. He poured it on.

"I'm telling you, Terry, if United Metals builds a power plant, you're a gone goose. And if anything similar happens, it's back to the hooks for you. We're in the power business. Just because it happens to be a monopoly doesn't mean the customer is always wrong!" He stopped shaking his finger at me and looked up. "Oh, hello, Miss Chappel. What is it?"

Then I recognized her. It was the blonde of the car episode, and her lovely face was slightly flushed at her inadvertent eavesdropping. She took a step inside the office.

"Mr. Burke would like to see you right away," she said. "He mentioned the Tinco Mine matter."

Velie stood up, and picked up some papers. "That's all, Terry. Just remember what I said—one more boner, and we'll have to take this responsibility off your shoulders. By the way, this is Anne Chappel, my new secretary. Terry Norton, Miss Chappel." And Velie bustled out, heading down the hall toward the Division Manager's office.

"Why didn't you tell me you were Sam's secretary the other day?" I asked her.

"I had just got the job that day. Besides, you didn't give me a chance. How badly were you bruised?"

"My hands are still sore, and my hip looks as if a mule kicked it. But if you learned the lesson, I'm satisfied."

She nodded gravely. I couldn't help admiring her. Before she had been the glamour girl; now she was the neat, crisp secretary in white blouse and plain skirt.

"You were right," she admitted. "But I'm glad to know that I'm not the only one who has felt the edge of your temper."

"It always helps to have an outsider listening when you're getting bawled out," I said.

"I won't repeat it—I'm not interested enough," she said loftily. "I wasn't even listening until I heard Jack Kinner's name mentioned."

"So you know the boy wonder of United Metals? You can pass along the word, then, that I meant exactly what I said, Sam Velie notwithstanding. I don't want any outsider playing around with that substation until we get a chance to rebuild it."

"Jack knows what he is doing! Why, he is a graduate electrical engineer. He's done a wonderful job with that old United Metals Plant."

"Sure, he probably wrote the book," I snapped. "Just the same, I want him to stay strictly on his own side of that equipment!"

She looked at me with tolerant amusement. Somehow she had placed me on the defensive again. I gave up, grabbed my battered hat, and started out. As I went past her, she said: "So glad to have met you officially, Mr. Norton." I didn't trust myself to answer, but stalked off down the hall, muttering under my breath. Lord deliver me from female women!

IN Montana, the electric-power business in June is no picnic. The weather is sudden, the storms unpredictable. The lightning probes with white-hot explosive fingers at transmission and distribution lines, and days which start out mild and calm wind up with a driving storm front, swirling down out of the mountains

on the back of a gusty wind. By midnight it is deceptively peaceful again, with the close white stars glittering in a flawless velvet sky. And my tired and mud-spattered men still have a couple of hours of repair work before they can pile into the red-and-gold trucks and head for home.

This June was no exception. The evening storms swooped in; the lightning hammered at our lines and cables and transformers, and the crews rolled. Tempers grew ragged; my men began to call the fat overtime checks "blood money," though ordinarily linemen love their overtime next to their wives and children.

OCCASIONALLY the weatherman's prediction of "clear and calm" was justified. On this night I was in my office, trying to catch up on my paper work. The crews had gone home, and the shop was a lake of quiet, studded with small islands of sound. A truck motor cooled with faint crackling noises; a signal klaxon squawked raucously twice and was silent. Somewhere, distantly, I heard a door thud shut.

I leaned back in the spavined swivel chair and lit a cigarette, damning the red-tape artists of Northern Hydro's accounting department. At the click of high heels across the concrete floor, I looked up. Anne Chappel stood smiling in the doorway of the little office.

"Hi, Terry," she said. "I plead for an armistice."

"Truce granted, Miss Chappel. What brings you here?"

"My car quit on me, Terry."

"I'll take a look at it," I agreed, starting to hunt for a tool kit. Then I stopped. "Are you in a hurry, Anne?" I was conscious of my work-clothes and day-old stubble of beard, but here on my home grounds they didn't seem to matter.

"Why, no. I have plenty of time," she replied.

"Then I'll show you around the place before I look at your car. You might be interested."

"Good. Maybe I'll have a little idea of what Mr. Velie is talking about sometimes."

I showed her the truck units, line jobs and pickups, diggers and winch trucks and crow-nests. In the supply room, I pointed out some of the thousands of items, and explained their uses. She was delighted at the names—crow-feet and rabbit-ears, twin-eye rods, sky pins, flying taps. She asked intelligent questions.

On the substation side, I introduced her to the man on shift. We showed her the massive water-cooled transformers which took the hundred thousand volts from the transmission lines and stepped it down to Corinth's dis-

tribution voltage. I explained the function of the big oil switches and the almost-human relays. . . . And grudgingly, I had to admire her. If she wasn't interested in this array of massive equipment, she was a swell actress.

Then I noticed the clock. "I'm sorry, Anne," I apologized. "Get me to talking shop, and I don't know when to quit. I'd better try to fix your car."

"I enjoyed it," she demurred. "It gives me a picture of the Northern Hydro business I haven't had before."

On the way out, we stopped before a large map of the city of Corinth. I pointed the lines running from the sub-station to feed various areas. With a slender finger she traced the heavy industrial circuit to United Metals. "So that's how Jack's plant gets its power," she commented.

I jumped at the opening. "I'll show you why your friend Kinner has me worried," I said, pointing. "There are two twelve-thousand-volt circuits into their plant, to prevent shutdowns. It was haywired in when they reopened during the war, and there is no safety interlock on the switches at present. When we kill one line to work on it, there is a chance someone might close in the switch. Then the power would feed through the live line, back onto the supposedly dead line. It could cause a bad accident to my crew. You can see why I don't want him monkeying around on our equipment."

"Oh, I'm sure Jack wouldn't make a mistake," she said. "He told me he spent many nights studying the circuits before he ever started on his modernization program."

I shook my head, but I let it go.

AT the car, I fastened together a snapped battery cable, and the motor started instantly when Anne tried it. "Thanks, Terry," she said. "And just think, not one battle all evening!" I grinned at her and managed to ask the question I had been holding back for the last half-hour.

"Going to the company dance Saturday, Anne?"

"Why, yes, I'm taking Jack," she answered, looking at me questioningly.

Now I knew I hated Jack Kinner. "I'll see you there, then," I said, making the best of it. "Be sure to save me a dance."

"Of course, Terry," she agreed, and drove away.

Northern Hydro's spring party was traditional. The management really spread itself; and for the evening, all feuds were laid aside, departmental strife vanished. The groundsman's wife queened it in her new outfit; the manager's wife did likewise. Green-oaks country club was bright and noisy

as I drove up in my company coupé and found a parking spot. As usual, I was alone.

On the steps, I turned and looked at the sky. Heavy clouds were building up in the southwest, and fitful gusts of wind skittered dust along the big porch. I headed for the bar, found a long, cool drink, and stood in the doorway, watching the crowd.

"Where's your girl, Terry?" a voice asked.

"Norton's a lone wolf, didn't you know, Anne?" Kinner laid unpleasant emphasis on the word "wolf." She shook her head gayly and put a cool hand in mine. The dance was informal, and her simple white sports dress, brightened with touches of crimson, made her tanned skin glow golden under the lights.

KINNER stood with a proprietary hand on her arm as we talked. In his light suit, he looked handsome and self-assured. I was as well-dressed, but I felt rawboned and clumsy standing beside him, with my lean height and burned skin.

But Anne slid into my arms without question when I asked for a dance. "It's a lovely party, isn't it, Terry?" She danced lightly, effortlessly.

"When I'm dancing with you," I replied sincerely. "But I don't expect to have many tonight."

"Why not?" she asked.

"Storm coming up; in another hour you'll see some of us pulling out, one by one, as the trouble calls come in."

"Oh, I hope not," said Anne, dismayed. "Mr. Velie and Mr. Burke

are so proud of their party. It will be a shame if some of you have to leave."

"That's the power business, though," I replied. "We're like those faithful couriers, except our job is to see that there is no 'gloom of night.'"

The dance ended. I returned Anne to Kinner, thanked her, and mixed with the crowd. But I found my eyes seeking out her slim figure on the dance floor. I didn't want to admit what was happening to me, so I walked into the bar. I ran into Sam Velie. Inevitably, within two minutes we were talking shop. . . .

Thirty minutes later the lights dimmed, brightened with overvoltage, settled to normal. I came to my feet, and Sam didn't detain me. I found a phone and called the substation.

"Argonaut line went out and came back in, Terry," the operator told me. "We got a little town trouble too—Number Fourteen to United Metals is out. They're running O.K. on Fifteen. I've got Paul, the night man, on it."

"Lorain? He shouldn't be on it alone."

"No, Bud Varnic's girl stood him up and he wouldn't go to the dance. He was hanging around here so I sent him out to grunt for Paul."

"Fine, Bill. But there's quite a storm on the way. I'd better send in

a few of the boys. I'll come in myself in a little while. Keep her under control."

I told Sam the story, and he nodded. On the dance floor, I tapped, one by one, a couple of linemen, a groundsman, and a truck-driver. Resignedly, they got clearance from their wives and left. Anne Chappel and Jack Kinner came toward me, and I halted them.

"We lost one feeder to your plant, Kinner. The other one is riding through, so you're still O.K. Thought you might like to know."

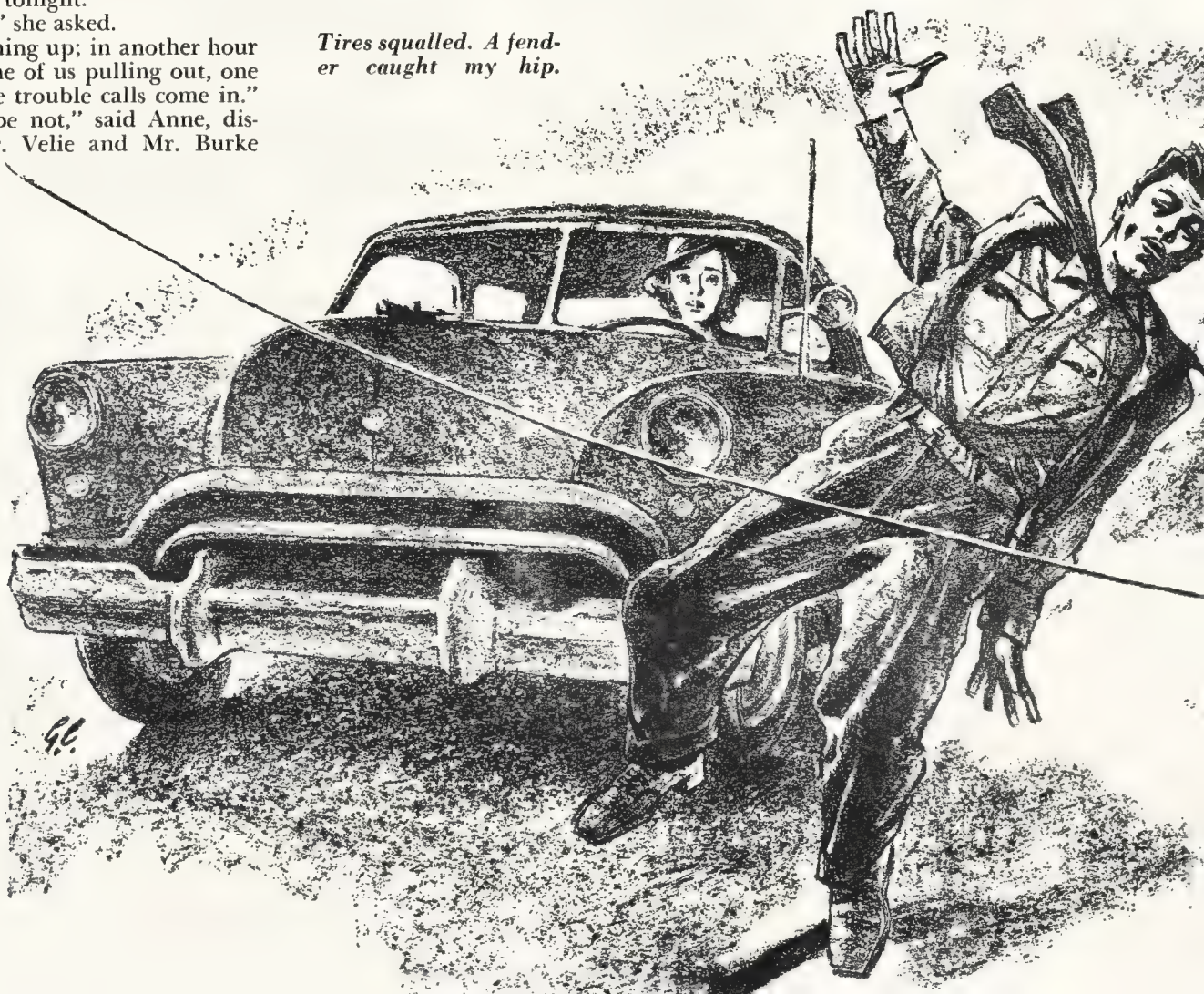
Kinner was an excitable type. "Dammit, we need our own power plant. If your other line goes out for as long as thirty minutes, a bunch of our process tanks will drop their charge. You'll have a lawsuit on your hands, Norton!"

"You're not hurt yet, Kinner. Why do you think we have duplicate lines running to U.M.?"

"I simply don't trust Northern Hydro equipment or Northern Hydro men. I've got to get out there right now. Anne, get your coat."

I was furious. "Kinner, you want to build up that two-bit job of yours until you are running United Metals. You hope your bosses will be impressed by your heroic devotion to duty. . . . Okay—but remember one

Tires squalled. A fender caught my hip.



Illustrated by
Grattan Condon



"Get set!" I called, and Lorain's weight sagged onto the rope. Then the kid slipped.

thing—keep your hands off the Northern Hydro side of your substation!"

He looked ready to take a swing at me, but thought better of it. I was disappointed. Scowling, he turned

to Anne. "Well, are you coming, Anne? Or are you going to stay here and play with Norton while he lets the distribution system fall to pieces?"

I hadn't known Anne Chappel long, but I made a bet that Kinner had

made an error. And I was right. She looked at him coolly.

"Why, that's a good idea, Jack. You go ahead—I know Terry will be glad to see me home. And do remember what he told you about interfering with *our* equipment!"

Kinner sputtered, turned on his heel, and was gone. Anne looked at me, her eyes sparkling. "He forgot that I'm Northern Hydro too, Terry. Let's dance."

But before we could start, an attendant came up and called me to the telephone.

"The Argonaut line is down solid, Terry," the operator informed me. "We just lost the Turtle Creek rural, and the Ninth Street crosstown is out. You better get down here."

I found Sam Velie and explained briefly. But I couldn't find Anne. Disappointed, I started down the steps. As I opened my car door, I heard someone call: "Wait for me, Terry. I'm going with you!" Anne came racing across the parking space, and breathless, jumped into my coupé.

"Sam would have taken you home, Anne," I reproved her. "I won't have time, and it's going to be a bad night."

"But I don't want to go home," she explained. "I want to see what a night trouble job is like. Of course, if you don't want me—"

I'm not always a fool. I grinned at her and jabbed the starter.

WE were halfway to town as the main storm hit. Rain drove slanting before the wind across the glare of the headlights. The tires whined a steady song on the wet blacktop, and the wipers whip-whapped in jerky cadence. But the lights of Corinth still gleamed steadily as we pulled up back of the Sub.

"Stay here, Anne—I'll be out in a minute," I told her, and dashed through the rain into the building.

"They haven't got Argonaut back yet, Terry," the operator said. "The crew you sent is out on the Ninth Street trunk. They found a broken wire near Madison Avenue."

"Where's Paul Lorain?"

"He called in, found the trouble on Fourteen—a busted insulator about six poles out from the U.M. plant. He's changing it on a clearance. He opened the cutouts at this end, and locked and tagged the Fourteen oil switch at United Metals himself."

"Good!" I commented. Paul should be safe with a padlock and a red clearance tag on the switch, though company equipment on customer property always gives me the willies. "I think I'll take a run out there, Bill."

I picked up a couple of slickers and went back to the car.

"Where to, Terry?" Anne asked.

"United Metals. Our trouble man found the trouble on Fourteen circuit near the plant. He's fixing it, but I thought that I'd better look it over. Night work in a driving rain is pretty tricky."

"Is there much other trouble?"

"It isn't too bad, but it could be. You see, Corinth is fed by two separate hundred-thousand-volt lines, one north from Argonaut power plant, one south from Split Rock. Either one of them can carry Corinth, but now the Argonaut line is down somewhere. If Split Rock fails, we'll be completely out of power, and then there will be hell to pay. The transmission trouble is on the Argonaut end, though, and they should have it fixed pretty soon."

We skirted the edge of town and cut up the hill on the U.M. road. At the top, a little way off the road, I saw the spotlight of the truck. Paul Lorain was a shadowy figure on the pole top in the glare of the light. I pulled my car to the side of the road, stepped out into the drizzle and struggled into one of the slickers.

"I'm going up to talk to Paul, Anne. You can watch from the car—there's no use ruining those pretty clothes when you don't have to." She waved a hand in reply as I turned away.

Just then every light in the sprawling U.M. plant blacked out. I turned—behind us, where Corinth should be, was an immensity of blackness, laced only by the moving streaks of automobile headlights!

"What is it, Terry?" Anne's voice came. She had opened the car door, and she sounded a little frightened. Ahead, only an occasional flare of distant lightning illumined the eerie scene.

"The Split Rock line went out, I guess," I replied. Undecided, I looked up the hill. Lorain worked on unconcernedly in the rays of the spotlight. Down in the U.M. yard, I could see the firefly gleam of flashlights moving around. A minute passed, and another. Still the intense darkness persisted.

SUDDENLY, magically, all the lights came on in the big plant below. And above us, on the hill, another, stranger light blossomed—a blue-green glare, flickering, unearthly. It plumed into the air above the pole. The brutal, frightening snarl of a power arc ripped through the night. Then it snuffed out. In the nimbus of the spotlight, I could see a shapeless bundle hanging in its safety belt. Paul Lorain had got into it!

I raced stumbling up the hill. Bud Varnic was standing helplessly at the foot of the pole. He turned to me, his strained face streaked with rain and tears. "Thank God it's you,

Terry. We've got to get him down." The lad's voice quavered.

"You got hooks, kid?" I snapped.

"Slim Roth's outfit is in the truck," Bud said, and raced to get it, glad of something to do.

"Is he dead, Terry?" Anne stood breathless beside me, almost lost in a shiny slicker, unmindful of the down-pour.

"Probably. We'll see in a minute," I answered, my mind racing furiously.

"Listen, Anne: I'm going up. I can't use pole-top resuscitation in this rain, so you'll have to tail onto that handline rope with Bud, and help lower Paul. The kid can't handle Lorain's weight alone on a single block. Will you do it?"

"Of course, Terry."

Bud handed me the outfit. With hurrying fingers I strapped on the climbers, stripped off my slicker and suit coat, cinched the heavy belt around my waist. The rain drove chill through my thin shirt. I hit the pole and my gaffs crunched sharply into the cedar as I climbed swiftly.

At the top, I flung my safety around the pole and snapped it into the D-ring. I was pretty sure the circuit was dead now, but I stayed clear of it. The handline block still hung on the crossarm where Lorain had placed it.

I grabbed the hook on the end of the line and jammed it under his belt.

"Take up a little!" I yelled. The limp body rose a few inches. "Get set!" I called, and unsnapped Lorain's safety belt. His weight sagged onto the rope.

Then the kid slipped, and the pulley block squealed. I heard Anne cry out in pain as the rough hemp bit into her hands. Leaning far out, I clamped a hand in the man's belt and took part of the weight. Something snapped in my trick shoulder, and a ragged torch of pain ran through it.

Then Bud got his footing. The two on the ground lowered the body. I clumped down alongside, steadying it, the nightmare scene ebbing and fading in successive waves of pain. Somehow I reached the ground, caught Lorain's body, and unhooked the rope. He was limp and leaden in my arms. I staggered to the truck, where there was a slight protection from the rain. Bud spread out my slicker, and I laid Lorain on it, face down. I cradled his head on a bent arm, swung astride his hips and settled my palms over his short ribs.

As I swung my weight forward to put on the pressure, pain exploded in my shoulder like a giant firecracker. Three times, in spite of it, I thrust



Kinner took a swing. My left caught him squarely.

forward and back. Then the world fogged, and I sagged.

When the red-shot blackness cleared, I found myself sitting on the running-board of the truck, retching. I had my left hand clamped viselike on my shoulder, trying to stifle the fiery pain. I raised my head, then shook it in disbelief.

In the glare of the light, now turned toward the ground, Anne was kneeling astride the lifeless body of Lorain. Her slicker was gone, her white dress was a rain-drenched ruin. With skirt hiked high on trim, nyloned legs, she was moving like an automaton in the slow, machinelike sequence of artificial respiration. She shook her dripping hair out of her eyes.

Cursing, I fumbled at straps, and got rid of the cumbersome belt and climbers. I lurched over to Anne, found my suit coat and placed it over the legs of the injured man. "Where's Bud?" I asked.

"Went—for help—your car," Anne jerked out between clenched teeth.

"Damn him for a nitwit!" I raged. I took Anne's discarded slicker and made a tent of it over Lorain's head with a random piece of wood.

"I—sent him—he didn't know—Schaefer method—yet!" Her words came slowly, ragged with strain.

I shook my head, humble in my admiration for the courage of this slender girl. The odor of Lorain's scorched flesh must be gagging at the back of her throat, as it was at mine. The sheer hard work of resuscitation must be dragging at her every muscle. But she kept on, steadily, indomitably. I swore at my useless arm, and tried to massage Lorain's arms.

In the spotlight, I could see that the burns on the lineman's hands were deep. But they were only burns. The spark of life, paralyzed by high voltage, must be brought back. And that was up to Anne.

SHE had worked far past the usual time for relief, but I could see her drawing vitality from some hidden reservoir of courage. At any moment she must collapse, and it would be over.

Then suddenly, sharply, she cried out: "Terry—I think—he breathed!" "Stay with it, Anne!" I encouraged. Desperately, I kept up my one-handed massage of his arms. Without faltering, she continued the slow, relentless timing. Then a low moan broke from Lorain's lips.

"Thank God!" I breathed quietly. "Just a little longer, Anne!"

Neither of us noticed the ambulance roll up. Only when the doctor tapped Anne on the shoulder and said admiringly, "I'll take over now, young lady," did we realize that help had come. Counting together, Anne and

the doctor exchanged places as smoothly as in a first-aid class, and she stood up. I put my arm around her, and she leaned her face against me, crying softly in reaction and relief.

IN a few minutes, Lorain was breathing normally. A hypo gave him merciful relief, and the ambulance crew wrapped him tenderly in blankets and slid him into the vehicle. I talked briefly with the doctor: then the big machine moaned away, the red glow of its emergency lights fading into the murk. Anne straightened and moved away from me, brushing vainly at her tangled hair.

"You should have gone with them and had that arm treated," she said accusingly.

"That will wait," I said grimly. "I've got another job to do first. . . . Bud!" I called. The groundman drove my car over to us. I helped Anne in, and climbed after her. "Drive us down to United Metals," I ordered. Anne leaned back, worn and silent.

"Anne, there is only one word for you—magnificent! You pulled Lorain back from the dead, single-handed. I just can't tell you—"

"Don't, Terry," she interrupted. "We all did what we could—even Bud, here. I don't see how he got the ambulance there so quickly."

"Boy, you should of seen me wheel this jalopy, Miss Chappel. But believe me, I'm learnin' that artificial respiration first thing tomorrow!"

We rolled through the wide gates of United Metals and turned toward the substation. Bud stopped the car and I got out. Under the yard lights, a man came toward us. It was Jack Kinner, his light suit rumped and stained. There was a belligerent expression on his face.

"Well, Norton, this tears it!" he snapped. "When I explain this completely unnecessary shutdown to our management, they'll give me the go-ahead on my power plant. And I don't think Northern Hydro will like you any more!"

"Oh, lay off it, Kinner," I said wearily. "That's petty stuff alongside the fact that you killed a man tonight."

HE dropped the wrench he was holding. His face paled. "Killed a man? What do you mean?"

"You know, all right. You got all excited when the power went off, not guessing it was a transmission failure. Being so damn smart, you went down to your substation, and ignoring the clearance tag, you unlocked Fourteen and closed it. You even left Fifteen still in. Then the power came back on, in over Fifteen, and out on Fourteen. And Paul Lorain, trusting his clearance, took twelve thousand volts through his body!"

His eyes were desperate. "I didn't touch Fourteen!" he yammered.

I stalked toward him, and he turned half away. Then he swung back to brazen it out. I reached behind and snatched something from his back pocket.

"Why, you louse, you didn't even have brains enough to destroy the evidence!" I shook it in his face, Lorain's red clearance tag, that Kinner had ripped from the switch handle! "If it weren't for Anne Chappel, who saved Paul, you'd be facing a manslaughter charge tomorrow."

That did it. He took a swing at me. I hate to hit anyone smaller than myself, but I figured that my useless arm evened things up. My left caught him square on the nose, and he sat down hard. He scurried clear on hands and knees, then jumped up and ran for his car. He was rocketing up the hill before we got started.

As Bud drove the car through the plant gates back toward town, Anne burrowed into the circle of my good arm. She looked up at me a long moment before she spoke.

"Terry, I just wanted to tell you that if you hadn't hit him, I'd have done it myself!"

Bud Varnic looked discreetly out the window at the shimmering lights of Corinth.

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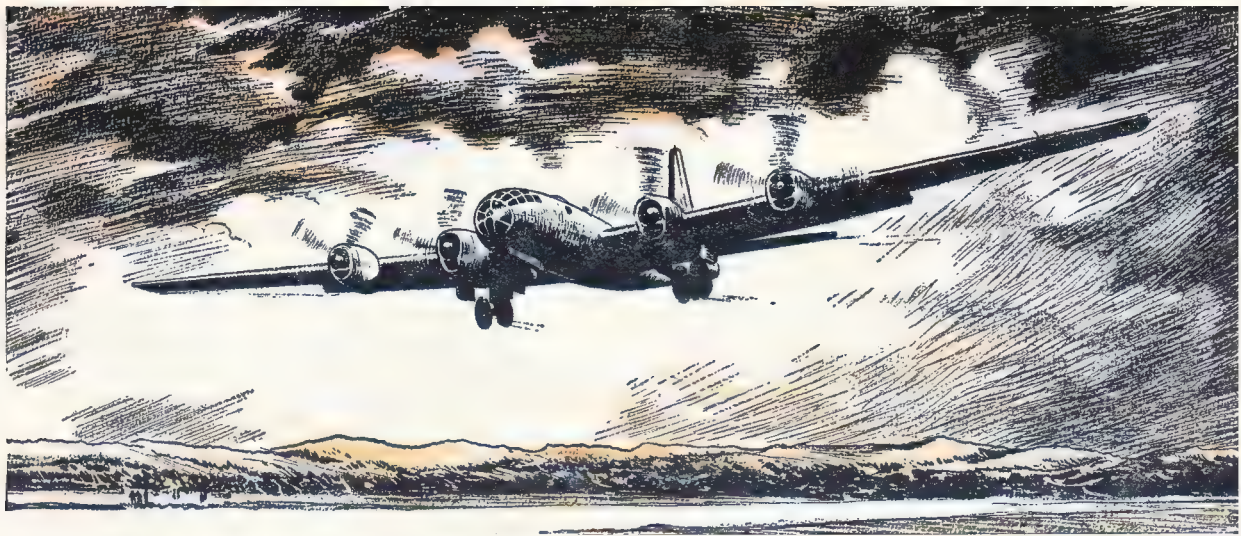
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I Fly into Typhoons

As told to KEN KANTOR, by First Lt. DODSON GRAYBEAL

HAVE you ever ridden a roller-coaster—one with broken rails in a blinding rain and with a hundred-mile-an-hour wind whistling around you?

I haven't, either, but I've flown into the "eye" of more than a dozen typhoons since my outfit, the 514th Weather Reconnaissance Squadron, U. S. Air Force, became typhoon chasers—when we moved out here to Guam, a region cursed with more storms than any other area on earth.

In July of 1949, one little sweetheart we called "Gloria" pounded apart most of the buildings on Okinawa, causing twenty million dollars' damage to military installations alone. Before that "Kathleen" swept across Japan's Kanto Plain with torrential rains which overflowed rivers and left two thousand dead in the Tokyo area. A few weeks later "Rosalind" flattened Iwo Jima with winds up to 160 miles an hour, then raced up across Okinawa and southern Japan. . . . Weather men give the typhoons girls' names, probably because they are so temperamental and unpredictable.

More recently there was "Libby." She was a heartbreaker, tearing our hangars to shreds on Iwo and uprooting entire installations on Okinawa. It was only a month after Libby struck that I received orders to fly reconnaissance on a typhoon called "Beverly."

I expected a routine flight that would keep me and my nine-man crew in the air ten to fifteen hours.

Then the phone rang. It was our Operations Officer: "Just got a report on Farnell, who flew this morning's flight into Beverly. He barely got out."

The call was no warning to delay our flight. Men who fly typhoons must bring back their reconnaissance reports. If they don't, ships, planes and land installations may be unprepared for perhaps nature's most destructive force when it strikes. Pilots of the 514th are one of the few groups authorized to clear their own flights. Some of us have taken off to reconnoiter storms although Air Force Operations refused to accept responsibility if we left the field.

At 2000 Zebra (that's six A.M.) we took off in a B-29 from Guam's North Field. A few hours' flying and we reached the fringe of the typhoon. A storm's whirling winds generally extend two hundred miles or more out from its "eye," a central area of dead air. We flew into the swirling mass of rain and wind and continued for nearly an hour—at the usual 10,500-foot altitude—without event before reaching the eye. Then we spiraled down to a dangerously low 1,500 feet to check weather at lower levels. Still we felt no strain on the ship. Beverly appeared normal, and no more turbulent than any other typhoon I had flown reconnaissance on. The eye itself was surprisingly well defined, rising straight up with perpendicular sides that eventually formed a dome almost churchlike in appearance.

I checked my instruments and searched for the most peaceful side of the eye to fly through on our return trip to the outside stratosphere. Once our big Superfort cut into the two hundred-mile-thick curtain of elements surrounding the eye, we'd be relying entirely on those instruments.

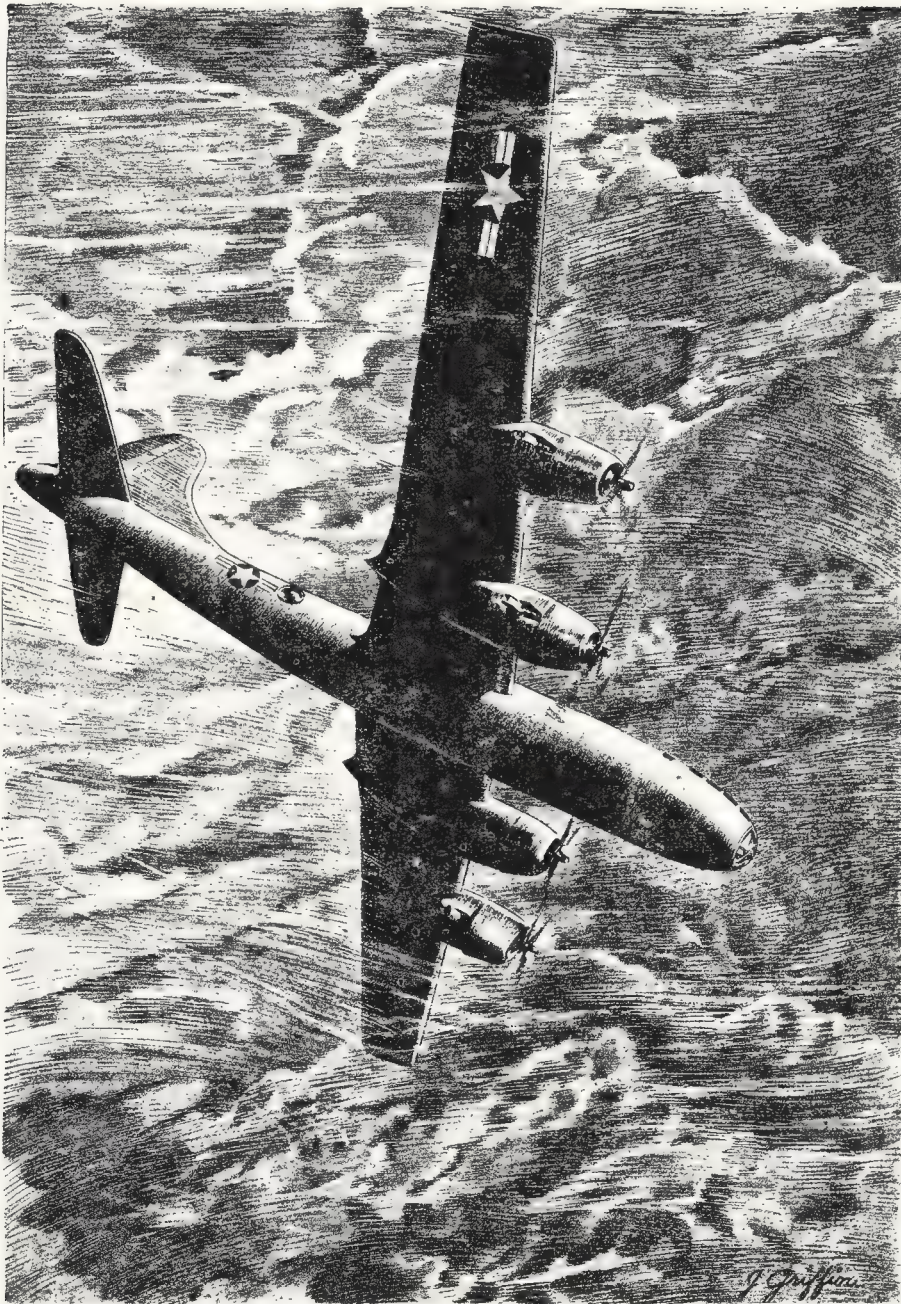
"This baby's not rough," I remarked to our weather observer.

But it was mistaken complacency.

WE were not sure of our position, having been carried along with the typhoon since entering it more than an hour earlier. If we flew out of the storm area on any southerly or westerly tack, we might crash into the jagged Sierra Madre range bordering the west coast of Luzon. So, after sizing up the four cloud walls with my navigator, I picked the northeast quadrant of the eye to fly through. This direction is often beset by the roughest weather, but we figured we were playing it safe by choosing it because nothing but the Pacific lay beyond—so we thought. So we headed northeast—directly away from our destination, Clark Field near Manila.

As soon as we left the eye we encountered severe turbulence. Suddenly a vertical current caught our 140,000-pound plane and shot it upward a half-mile. We were finding out why Beverly had been described as "the roughest typhoon ever flown" so far as the Weather Wing was concerned.

Her one hundred-mile-per-hour and faster winds were not frightening. We



could ride them out. But rapid cross-currents, updrafts and downdrafts were tossing our ship around like a toy balloon. Although we were trying to maintain level flight, we were traveling almost as far vertically as horizontally. It took all the strength of both me and my co-pilot, Lieutenant Frank Johnson, to keep our controls steady. Despite our efforts, drafts lifted or plunged the plane as much as 3,500 feet at a time. If we had not been strapped down, all ten of us would have been sent spinning.

We were flying in what looked like a sea of water. But I don't believe a single man in the plane was scared. We didn't have time to be. Our usually dependable pressure altimeter read 4,500 feet and we were heading down fast in another vertical draft. It read 3,900 feet when our radar man

shouted out above the roar of the motors that we actually were at nine hundred feet according to the radar altimeter, a sure calculator. We had nine hundred feet between us and the sea—an invisible sea that we knew was being madly beaten by tremendous rain and winds. I felt I was about to shake hands with my Maker. Drowning is an ignominious way of dying. You don't have a chance to fight back. You swallow a few times and then it swallows you.

Even if the downdraft ended before we struck, the momentum of our dive probably would carry us into the Pacific. However, at eight hundred feet Walker and I felt our sticks finally react, and the ship's nose swerved skyward again. But the controls were ours for seconds only, then we hit another current. This one boosted

us 3,300 feet. I shouted to our weather observer, Lieutenant Aldino Fascini, "How long have we been in this stuff?" It had seemed like at least fifteen minutes, probably twenty, but Al yelled back: "Eight minutes." A moment later we began getting into a lighter turbulence and suddenly broke out into the clear.

We were now on the outside of the typhoon and began making our routine double-drift runs from various angles to determine wind velocities. I saw overhead clouds that made up the outer fringe of Beverly's upper parts. Below I could see the ocean surface which we would have struck if that downdraft had continued a few hundred more feet. The foaming water looked as if it were being stretched like a sloop's mainsail in a gale.

After making our circumnavigational run around the typhoon, I nosed the 29 toward Clark. En route our radio operator picked up a call from Farnell, our deputy commander who had flown recon on Beverly the day before. "Graybeal, do not fly reconnaissance on Beverly at a low level under any circumstances," he ordered. I looked at Johnson; Johnson looked at me. Neither of us spoke a word, but we didn't need words to echo: "Now he tells us!"

"Thank the Major," I said to the radio operator, "and tell him we won't reconnoiter Beverly at low level—never again."

We had been in flight approximately thirteen hours and were on edge by the time I set our plane down at Clark Field that night. I walked wearily into Operations to cancel my flight plan. As I reached across the counter, someone jostled my arm. I turned angrily and was looking at Lee Farnell. "Major," I asked, "are you an angel, or am I back on the ground?"

He assured me I was on the ground. But after hearing about his flight into Beverly, ours seemed strictly routine.

Farnell left the eye of the storm shortly after the sun went down and had to turn on all his cockpit lights. Since it was dark, he and his navigator were unable to see cloud formations or get any indication of what turbulence to expect. Immediately after leaving the typhoon eye, his radar man had warned that it looked bad. Like us, they were flying at 1,500 feet.

Lieutenant Bob Kizer of Indiana, along for training, was sitting on the flight deck between Farnell and the co-pilot when the ship struck a downdraft. To pull the plane up, Farnell needed to increase her power, but both he and his co-pilot had to maintain their grips on their dual-control sticks because of the terrific pull exerted by the draft. The plane would go berserk if either let go. So Farnell

asked Kizer to step up the props, but as Kizer reached for the toggle switch, the ship ran into another extremely sharp downdraft. Kizer was lifted straight up. Farnell swears the man remained suspended in mid-air for several seconds, and meanwhile no one could reach the switch as the plane catapulted toward the ocean at two thousand feet a minute.

Finally, after what seemed an eternity, the ship flew out the end of the downdraft which fortunately, like the one we were in, did not quite reach the sea. At times the rain beat upon the craft's transparent nose so hard, according to Farnell, that he actually didn't know if they were still flying or had already dunked into the ocean. Once the radio operator screwed down the transmitter. This means he felt a crash was inevitable and permits the transmitter to continue sending so that the nearest receiver can obtain a "fix" on the plane. When Farnell set the ship down at Clark, he found her tail assembly had been badly twisted and most of her interior equipment torn loose.

BUT as rough as Beverly was, she failed to give me the scare that Agnes did two weeks earlier. The danger occurred on the take-off before we had even begun chasing the typhoon.

Last summer when this little dream-load of hot air whipped across the Marianas I received orders to fly into her at a time when a fifty-mile-an-hour crosswind from Agnes' skirt was lashing our field. As we prepared to take off I was given a zero ceiling from the tower. I pointed the ship down the east-west runway, and as she picked up speed I realized we were in for no ordinary take-off. A fifty-mile-an-hour headwind would ease the plane into the air, but a fifty-mile-an-hour crosswind was about as helpful as a row of fifty-foot trees in the middle of the runway.

We were moving at 120 miles an hour. I had the rudder clear over and was not using the throttles for motors No. 3 and No. 4 on the ship's downwind side. But I couldn't keep the plane on a straight course and the crosswind was pulling us toward the edge of the runway. If I waited for our momentum to lift the ship as on a normal take-off, we would slip off the strip and more than likely crash. So I pulled back on the stick despite the heavy crosswind. The wheels left the ground; I began breathing again.

That was my toughest take-off in seven years of flying, including thirty missions over Europe. Almost immediately after leaving the ground we were forced to ride the gauges because of low visibility. But once clear of the field, we flew our usual typhoon reconnaissance without trouble. Al-

though the same conditions prevailed the entire day at North Field, men of the 514th made four take-offs before sundown to bring back typhoon reports. . . .

A few weeks ago Colonel Tom Moorman, Jr., who commands all Air Force weather operations in the Pacific, flew reconnaissance on Gloria, one of the most destructive typhoons yet encountered. The Colonel, flying with Captain Roy Ladd of New Mexico, entered the fringe of Gloria a few miles off the coast of Okinawa. Although she was loaded with heavy rains and tremendous winds, Gloria did not prove too rough in the air. But on the ground she was ripping apart buildings and flinging planes about disdainfully. Days later the damage was calculated at more than two hundred dead and injured and over 40,000 structures demolished on Okinawa as well as two hundred thousand homeless in Shanghai.

But Moorman and Ladd lacked this information when they broke out of heavy weather into the typhoon eye at ten thousand feet. "We looked down," the Colonel told me, "and Okinawa was directly below." (In

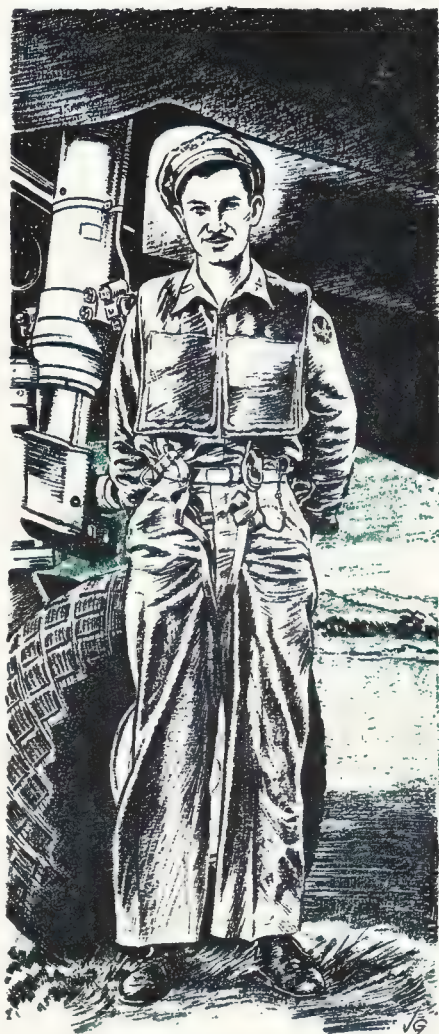
other words, the island was feeling the full fury of the typhoon's central winds.) "Our radio man called for Okinawa to come in, and after a short wait we picked up the only transmitter still operating on the island. For nearly a half-hour we remained in the storm center, informing Army and Air Force commanders below of our weather observations so they could best utilize whatever slight respites allowed them by the storm. In return, the spunky radio operator in the midst of it gave us a blow-by-blow description of the destruction being wrought on the island and of the needs of our forces stationed there.

"Time and again he came in with such remarks as: 'Planes and buildings are breaking to pieces. . . . Chickens, pigs and goats are sweeping past me.' Then a pause, and 'Sides of metal Quonsets are now being hurled by my window.' Air speed meters on the ground were registering 175-mile-per-hour winds before they went out of commission.

"Finally, he hurriedly cut in: 'The roof's gone here, the antenna's gone, and now, sir, I think I'd better go!'"

Ladd and the Colonel had been in flight seventeen hours when they finished their reconnaissance of Gloria. Yet, when Ladd is questioned about the mission, he dismisses it nonchalantly. "Hell, you guys should have flown the Hump with us when that Burma Road was being pieced together. We flew in such muck that a pilot would never know whether his plane was pointing up or down, except for the basket handed him when he climbed into his ship. It contained a plumb-bob, a tomcat and a goose. The plumb-bob was hung from the top of the plane over the side and we flew by it until it started throwing half-hitches in the string, at which time the tomcat was released. A cat will always climb to the high side, so the plane was banked toward the side that the cat was climbing. This method of instrument flying was used until we were ready to come in for a landing. Then the goose was released. We followed the goose until he flared his wings, power was cut, we hauled back on the stick, and we were on the ground again."

FEW of us on Guam can claim typhoon flights as rugged as Ladd's tale of the Hump. In our three seasons of chasing typhoons we have never had a plane crash nor lost a man on storm reconnaissance. Sure, I've come close several times. And a couple of twisters named Madeline and Nelly probably will breeze across these parts before the current season's over, but most of us are getting used to these Oriental roller-coasters.



Last Man In

A story of Officer Murphy and of three boys who had exchanged talismans many years before, and who had believed in them, and had tried to remain true to them.

by JOEL REEVE

OFFICER MURPHY was off duty and going home to his modest apartment on Kay Street. The Old Neighborhood lay glistening under night lights, overlaid with a patina of drizzling rain. The lean policeman shivered a little, turning the corner.

He was, for once, lonely inside him. There should have been no reason for this. Every man, woman and child in the Old Neighborhood knew Murphy, spoke with him, consulted him, believed in him. No matter the hour, there was no door upon which he could not knock and be received as one of the family. Yet within him there was loneliness. A line from his high school days kept recurring to him, "*For old unhappy far-off things. . .*" He never could remember the rest of the poem, but the line haunted him.

He was silly, he told himself. The Neighborhood, like every community, had its share of memories for all old-timers. But what was unhappy about it? People were born, lived, went away or remained. This was the life stream, and nothing could be done about it; and of all people Officer Murphy should have known this. Yet tonight he was lonely.

He entered his apartment—it was a first-floor flat in a duplex, a new place he had taken to make room for his growing library and record collection, for he had taken to sedentary pleasures lately, feeling middle age approaching. He turned on the light in his living-room.

A man's voice said: "Murph, don't reach for your rod."

He stood transfixed. He stared at the figure in the easy chair, at the pugged nose, the freckled face, the wide, grinning mouth, the square-set frame. He gasped: "Jack Hanrahan! Where in the world did you come from?"

The stocky man got up and stuck out his hand. In it was a coin with a square hole in the middle. It was an old Chinese coin. Once it had been tied on a string with two others. It

had no more intrinsic value than an iron washer, but Hanrahan grinned wider as he showed it to Murphy. "I come from the last place I happened to be. I'm here to talk with you."

Murphy felt in his pocket. The worn piece which matched the one Hanrahan held was smooth amidst the small change. Murphy said, half to himself: "I wonder if Tony still has his?"

"I would talk about that, Murph," said Hanrahan. He sat down again, and Murphy sat opposite him. They looked hard at one another, the cop and the well-dressed, prosperous-looking man who had returned to the Old Neighborhood like a thief in the night.

Hanrahan said: "You mind how the three of us talked to each other with the coins in our hands, and while we held them, we could not tell an untruth?"

"Talisman. Last man in's a rotten egg!" Murphy smiled. "We talked a lot, in the Old Neighborhood. You were to be a bank president. Tony Ford wanted to be President, period."

"And even then, you wanted to be a cop." Hanrahan nodded. He wore a diamond ring on his left hand. He held the coin in his right hand. "Well, Tony's high in the State. Might be Governor. And you're a cop."

Murphy said softly: "And what of you, Jack? How does it go?"

HANRAHAN'S grin stretched a bit too thin. "Ah. You know, Murphy. I've been here, I've been there. Across many seas. In foreign lands. And Miami, Palm Beach, Reno, Elko, Las Vegas, Chicago, Cicero. Always takin' that chance, Murph. Always a fast guy with a buck. I make a few, I lose a few. And then I make a connection, I got things tied up right here, in our own State. From the capital to the bogs—I got it tied up."

"Wire service? Book-making?"

Hanrahan nodded. "And football, baseball, basketball—what you got? Tied it up, for Hanrahan."

Murphy said: "Well. It goes on. Not my business, Jack. The politicians say I'm just the neighborhood cop."

Hanrahan nodded. "I know. Tony Ford—he hasn't been back in the Neighborhood in a long time either, has he?"

"Tony's a very big man upstate. Tony don't need votes. He's got influence. Tony lives upstate now."

Hanrahan nodded again. He said: "Tony will be here tonight."

"Here?"

"In this house. Any minute."

"On account of—the talisman?" Murphy nodded at the hand which held the Chinese coin.

"He could stop me. I've gambled all my life, Murph." Hanrahan was suddenly sweating a little. "I've tried to be square. People gamble—they win, they lose. I've taken my chances. Now I've got it tied up. The whole State. Tony can stop me as part of his political platform."

MURPHY said gently: "So maybe Tony's got to do this."

"For what?" demanded Hanrahan angrily. "You know about the High Point paving deal? You know about the waterfront deal? You know about—a dozen things Tony Ford had a finger in?"

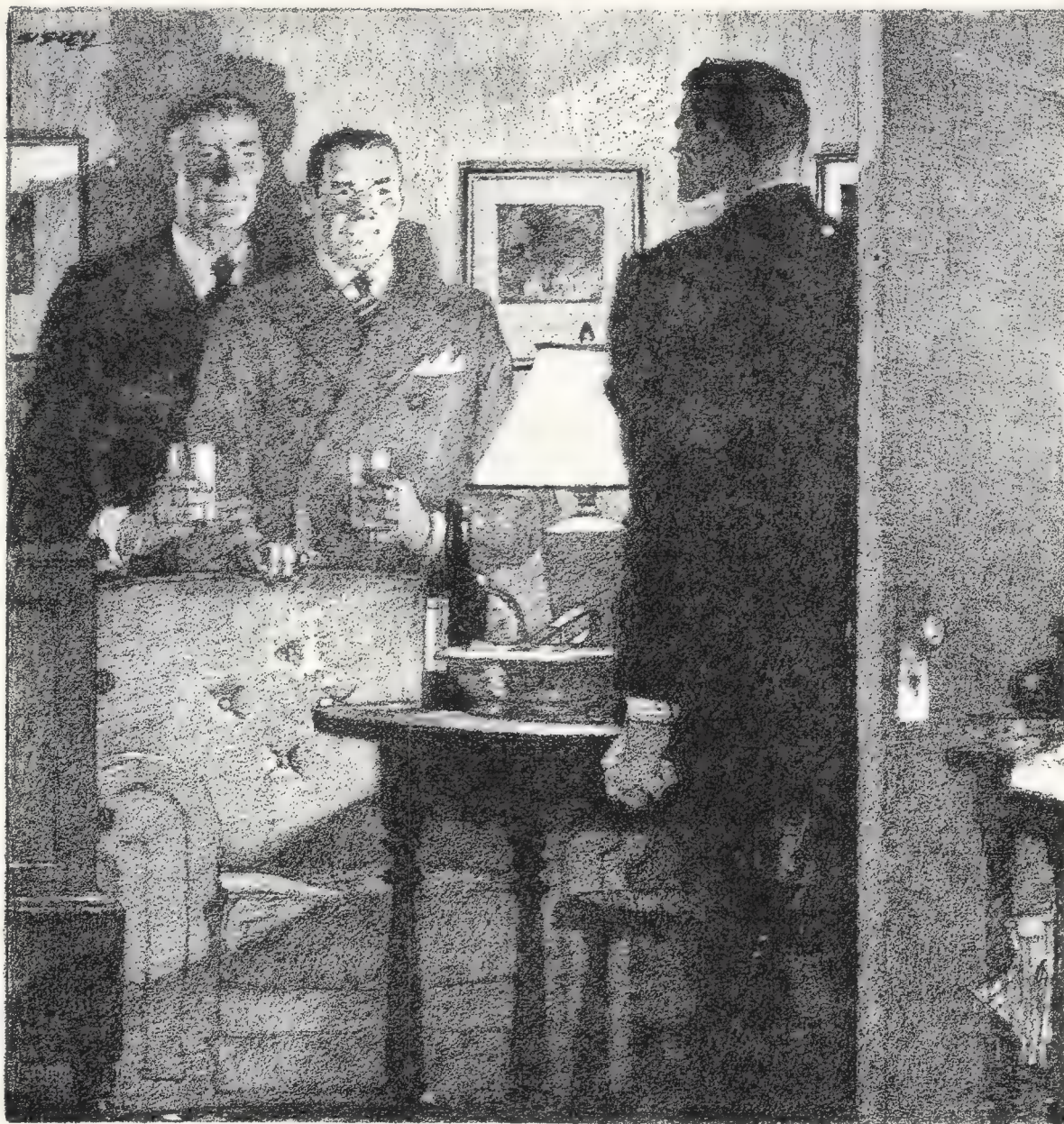
"I've heard," assented Murphy cautiously.

"You know Big Lacey? And his hoods, Hi-Boy Gray and McNally? You know how Big Lacey would run the gambling, under cover and dirty and crooked? Tony is Big Lacey's mouthpiece—do you know that?"

Murphy said: "You mean Tony would let you in—then throw you out, to get a name? Then let Lacey in?"

Hanrahan said: "Tony's a politician."

There was a car drawing up outside the house. Murphy got to his feet. The coin slipped through the fingers of the hand in his trousers pocket. "*For old, unhappy, far-off things,*" he muttered. "Now, how did I know? I'll leave the place to you, Jack. It's



"I don't want to hear about that," said Murphy. "That is more than none of my affair."

not seemly for me to be present at this talk. I'm a cop, remember?"

He walked out the back door as Jack Hanrahan went to meet his old classmate in the high school, Anthony J. Ford. He walked in the drizzle of rain, shoulders hunched, coat collar turned up. He was lonelier than ever now, thinking of the two companions of his youth, of their sworn fealty and of what life had done to them.

He walked past Humperknickel's Delicatessen, Hogue's Radio Shop, Harry Hoople's Saloon. The night lights shone on the wet pavement, for it was past the closing hour. In the offices of the *Clarion* it was bright, and he hesitated, then went up to see

Ace Fletcher, the night editor. He talked for a while about the political situation, and Ace said: "Tony will get the Neighborhood vote. But we're not going to support him. I don't like Big Jim Lacey."

"What about Tony and Lacey?" Murphy fished.

Fletcher said: "There's some kind of a deal pending. We haven't got it yet. Traudt's working on it. There's something rotten afoot. It's bigger than the Neighborhood, Murphy. It's State-wide, and it could be nation-wide. It's gambling, vice, all that goes with it. Controlled by a single head, administered better than most government. No robbery, no clip

stuff—nothing you, for instance, could put your hard hand upon. If we find Tony is mixed up in it, we'll crucify him."

"Tony couldn't do that," said Murphy firmly. "He'd make deals, to get elected, to be in power. But Tony's no crook."

"We'll find out," said the acid editor. "And we'll flay him if we must."

Murphy left the office of the *Clarion*. He walked past Geoghan's saloon. The tough joint, where the Neighborhood bums and no-goods hung out, seemed deserted. But Murphy had a nose for clandestine goings-on, and an eye for a sliver of light from a shaded window up the alley. He moved



The big man tried hard to hold the gun straight. He fired—his shot went wild.

silently to the rear door of the bar-room.

There were voices which did not bother to be hushed. He waited a moment, then knocked, using his knuckles in a way that would be understood by Geoghan. There was a long wait; then the door opened a crack and Patsy said: "For God's sake, Murphy, go away. I ain't sellin' anything. I ain't breakin' no ordinance. It's just some pals, see? Go away."

Murphy said: "I wouldn't bother you, Patsy. I'll just take a look at your pals and run along."

Geoghan said hoarsely: "No, Murphy. For your own good—" He tried to restrain Murphy with his bulk.

Murphy used his lean, strong hands, setting Geoghan aside as easily as though he had been made of straw. The rear door led directly into the back room of the saloon. Three men sat around the deal table. One of them said brightly: "Well, hi, boy?"

The big man sat silent, with a Buddhalike expression. He was a bland, brown-skinned man. He wore neat, expensive clothing and a flashy hand-painted tie. He had the smoothest face in the world, Murphy thought, not a wrinkle in it, and the smallest, brightest eyes.

The third man was small and lean, and as dangerous as a snake, although not as dangerous as the one who beamed and smiled and ran a manicured hand through curly blond hair.

Murphy said: "Hello, Hi-boy. Hello, McNally." He did not speak to the big man, because he had never met him. Hi-boy was a handsome young yellow-haired gent who was reputed to be handy with any weapon,

any time, any place. Murphy would have given a lot to know explicitly where and when Hi-boy performed. McNally had done a rap for assault, at Murphy's instance. Both had long since left the Neighborhood for more fertile fields.

Geoghan choked: "Jim Lacey—this here is Officer Murphy."

The big man's voice was deep as the ocean. "Hello, Murphy."

"Officer Murphy," corrected Murphy.

"Officer Murphy," nodded the big man. "That's right. We got to have some damned respect around here."

Hi-boy giggled. But McNally came to his feet, crouching a little. His voice was high, threatening. "You ain't on duty. This is private property. You got no call buttin' in here, you dirty black Irish copper—" His hand went instinctively to the lapel of his double-breasted jacket.

MURPHY had him, like a terrier grabbing a rat. He had him, and he tossed him, bouncing him off the wall. When McNally fell forward, Murphy was on him, using him as a shield against the others, extracting a gun from its holster with the ease of a magician taking a rabbit from a tall hat.

McNally screeched: "I got a permit for that gat."

Murphy broke the gun, extracted the cartridges. It was a snub-nosed .32. Carefully, Murphy took out a pencil and notebook and jotted down the serial number. He said: "I'll be checking this with your permit, flannel-mouth. Now sit down and shut up."

He tossed the gun and cartridges on the table. He said to Jim Lacey: "You don't keep very good company, Mr. Lacey. These boys are not wanted in this neighborhood. Get them out!"

The big man's bland face showed not a wrinkle. "And for myself?"

"I have nothing on you," said Murphy. "Just keep your nose clean, Mr. Lacey. This is my neighborhood."

"So I've heard," nodded Lacey. "So I've heard. A good job you do, Officer Murphy. The day might come when I'll need you—to keep order."

"That'll be the day," said Murphy quietly. For a moment the silence was thick in the room. Then Hi-boy giggled again. Murphy nodded and turned and went out the back door. The rain had increased. Hi-boy was on the hop, he thought, going back toward his apartment. McNally was a killer without the stuff, but Hi-boy was stuck full of needles.

Lacey and the two hoods in the neighborhood—and Tony. And Jack Hanrahan, the plunging square gambler who could have been a bank president, maybe, if it had not been for that wild streak. And Ace Fletcher was on the track of a story; he had Arthur—Little Gooney—Traudt, his star reporter, digging for facts. How far had they come from those days in high school, when the three talismans had bound them, as they thought, forever together?

He entered his home by the back door. Laughter came from his living-room—the sound of clinking glasses. He sighed and went into the room.

Anthony J. Ford was silver-haired before his time, homely but fit-looking, carefully but quietly attired, smil-

ing with the whitest of teeth, smiling with his deep-set brown eyes, too. He said: "Murphy, bless your soul! The best of us." He had the Chinese coin in his hand; Murphy could see it.

Murphy said: "Tony, it's good to see you."

Jack Hanrahan said: "It's all ironed out, Murph."

"I don't want to hear about that," said Murphy. "That is more than none of my affair."

Tony Ford said affectionately: "The honest cop! It's a wonderful thing you have done, keeping the Neighborhood in shape. It's a great thing you do every day, watching over it. Alderman Harrigan does not spare his praise, Murph."

Murphy said: "I'll take a small drink of my booze with you. Then we can talk, eh? Just the three of us, but without the coins in our hands, for I would not know too much of the truth of what goes on in high places."

Ford's face went dark and sad. "And this is shameful, but correct. For what life does to us is something that no high-school youth should ever face."

Hanrahan said bluffly: "Come, come. After all, this is a world we never made. To get along, there must be compromises. Why not make 'em with our eyes open? I can hold the coin in my palm and talk freely. Why not?"

"Because Murph has never left the path we decreed for ourselves in those

days of our youth," said Tony Ford. "You and I, we have made our efforts to be big fellows. Murph—he's stayed at home and he is a big fellow."

"Such talk!" grumbled Murphy. "I'm a cop—that's all. And sometimes me feet hurt. G'wan—remember the baseball team, the year we win the city championship?"

They talked through the small hours of the morning.

MURPHY was weary from his night of wassail. When he gave Jingle, his obtuse and cantankerous assistant in the unique patrol of the Neighborhood, instructions for the day, he wanted more than anything a quick, quiet beer in Harry Hoople's back room.

The way they worked it, Murphy walked the Neighborhood beat while Jingle drove the prowler car. At a certain hour they met and switched, a situation Jingle deplored at great length, as he hated all forms of exercise. But they covered the Neighborhood, and citizens were safe to walk past dark alleys even on a rainy night.

The rain had continued and everything was saturated, including Murphy. It was going on ten o'clock at night, and the long day was ending. Jingle would take the prowler car in, and Murphy could go home and play

his records and read awhile, if he could keep his eyes open. He plodded along toward his apartment, slicker collar upturned, head down.

His telephone was ringing when he went in. He picked it up and said: "Murphy speaking."

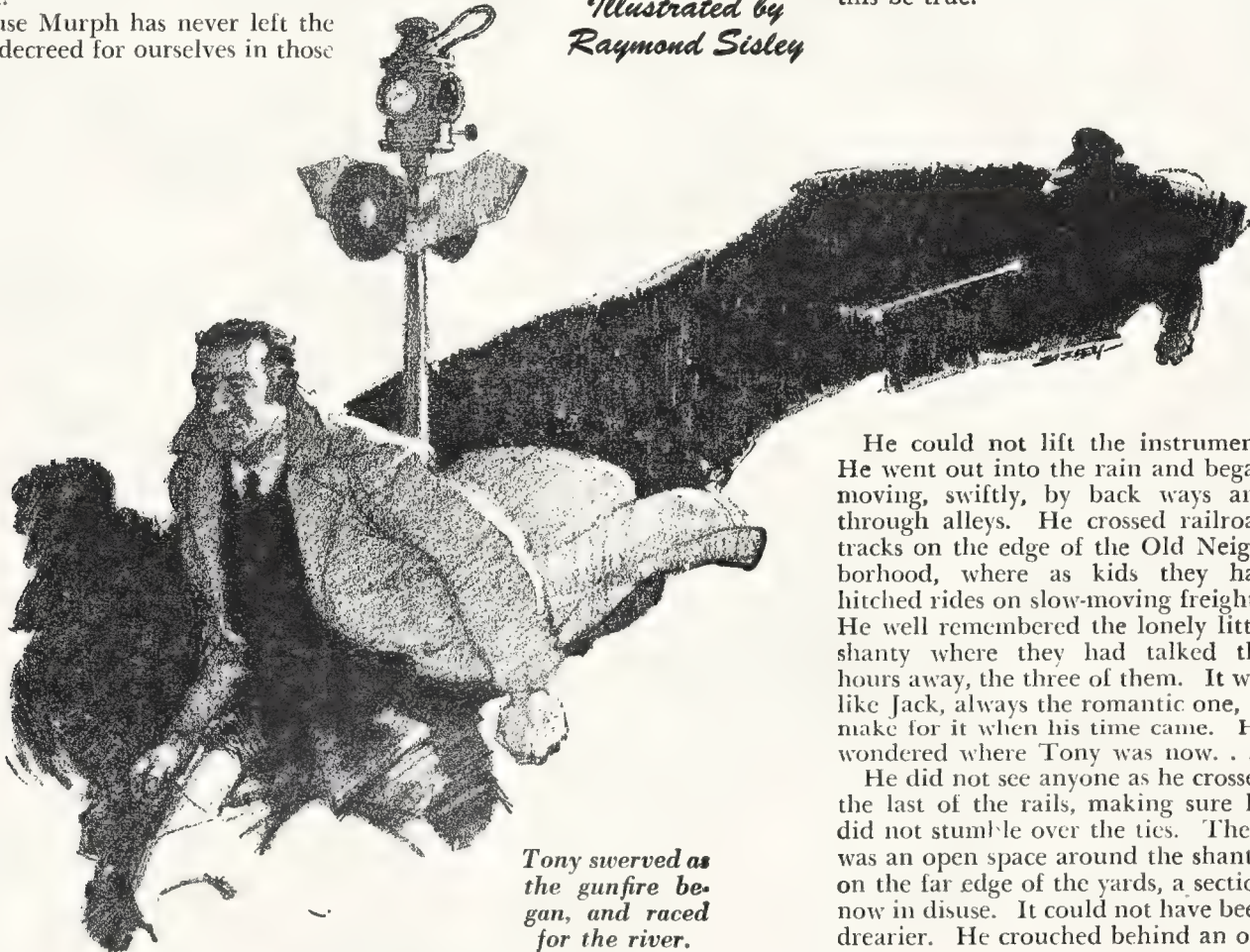
"Murphy? . . . Jack. . . . They're after me, Murph. . . . Tony crossed me. . . . I got no time. . . . I'm in a booth. . . . But they're close on me. . . . I'm makin' for the little shack by the yards—remember? The old watchman's shed. . . . I gotta gun, Murph. . . . I'll be there—dead or alive."

The connection was broken. Murphy stared at the dead black instrument in his hand as the portent of Hanrahan's words sunk into his mind. Slowly he hung up.

He turned toward the door, turned back. He should call Headquarters. He should call Fletcher, privately, and get Arthur Traudt on the job. He knew he should do these things. His hand stole into his pocket and found the coin with the square hole in its center.

"Tony crossed him?" he addressed the telephone. "Tony? Tony turned him up for Lacey and his hoods?" He remembered Tony's warm smile, his earnest words. Anthony J. Ford, an up-and-coming man, maybe a future Governor. "He turned up Jack to a gang of murderers and thieves? Can this be true?"

*Illustrated by
Raymond Sisley*



*Tony swerved as
the gunfire be-
gan, and raced
for the river.*

He could not lift the instrument. He went out into the rain and began moving, swiftly, by back ways and through alleys. He crossed railroad tracks on the edge of the Old Neighborhood, where as kids they had hitched rides on slow-moving freights. He well remembered the lonely little shanty where they had talked the hours away, the three of them. It was like Jack, always the romantic one, to make for it when his time came. He wondered where Tony was now. . . .

He did not see anyone as he crossed the last of the rails, making sure he did not stumble over the ties. There was an open space around the shanty, on the far edge of the yards, a section now in disuse. It could not have been drearier. He crouched behind an old

empty deserted flat, then moved between it and a rusting gondola. He could see the shack plainly against the murky skyline. Had Jack made it, he wondered?

He remained there a long moment, waiting for sign. He had been a cop for too many years to move blindly against unseen enemies. He thought of McNally, of the grinning, giggling Hi-boy, of the bland Lacey. These were dangerous men, and Lacey was powerful. Lacey was a nation-wide power, in fact. The killing of a cop out here in the lonely yards would be as nothing to Lacey. Such men as— as Anthony Ford, would cover for him.

SOMEONE moved; a figure, bent over and running, broke away from the cars not fifty feet from Murphy and made for the old shack.

Murphy came away from the deeper shadows. There was a shot. The figure increased its speed. Murphy had his service revolver in his hand. He fired twice at the flash of the other gun. Then he too began racing across the open space, crying: "It's me, Jack! It's Murphy!"

He turned as bullets began coming at him. He fired as he ran, lacing the darkness with the remaining shells in his pistol. As he hit the door of the shack and tumbled in, he was reaching for more shells in the packet he always carried at night.

He gasped: "All right, Jack. Just did make it, huh?"

For a moment there was no reply. Then a voice came: "Jack made it. But he isn't talking. They put a slug in him."

"Tony!"

"Yeah," said Tony Ford.

It was too dark to distinguish features, and Murphy dared not unlimber his flashlight. He said: "It was you, running ahead of me."

"Yeah." Tony was not speaking in the accents of a big man in the State. He was speaking like a boy in high school in the Old Neighborhood. "Yeah, it was me, Murph. You know who's out there? Lacey and his two hoods. Maybe some more of 'em. They been threatenin' to get Jack—to get me."

"You didn't cross Jack, then?"

Tony said: "They wanted him to think that. They grabbed him and let me go. They patted my back and gagged me and talked where he could hear them. It was near his hotel, Murph. They jammed him in a car. Then they threw me out. I had to walk, and I didn't want to holler cop. I tried to get you—"

"Jack got me."

"Well?" Tony's voice was weary. It was the end of the route for him, whichever way it went, Murphy knew suddenly. He could never escape the

tar from the brush of this affair. Heroic or villainous, he was in it; and Lacey was in it, and people would talk, and truth would be garbled, and Tony was through as a national white hope.

"It's our affair. Us against them," said Murphy. "I didn't call Headquarters, neither. Jack thought—"

They were kneeling across the body of the man on the floor. Jack Hanrahan lay quite still. There was blood on his clothing. He wore a light-colored top-coat, and Murphy got it off him and put it under his head. Again shots sounded from without. Murphy mechanically counted them. "More'n the three of 'em. Lacey musta called in some hoods. They can't lay a siege, Tony. They got to get us quick. We got a patrol car out this way every hour. It'll be along. If they hear shots, they'll put it on the air, and the whole Force'll be here in jig time."

"But we'll be dead," said Tony. He stood up, and Murphy could see his face against the paneless window, sharp and strained. "They got Jack. They don't know it, but they got him. They don't really want me—I'd be better alive and under their heels. There is no use in you taking it, Murph. I can go out there and stop all this."

"By goin' along with them," nodded Murphy. "That's what they want. A man like you—to cover them. They'd blackmail you forever."

"Yeah," said Tony.

"And me, a cop, I'd know about it," said Murphy gently. "All the time, I'd know it. And they'd be so powerful I could do nothin' about it. I'm no hero, Tony. But I am a cop."

There was a silence in the shack. The firing had ceased. Murphy looked out of the window. Shadowy figures were assembling near the two deserted freight-cars. There would be a quick charge in a moment. They might even have a machine-gun. The shack would be no protection then.

Tony said: "I see it all, Murph. We reached for power. You can't have power without using force—physical or other sorts of force. That's how you get power. And this is where it brought Jack and me. I was going along with Jack. I knew gambling would persist. I thought he'd handle it better. Lacey fooled me. He was smarter and more ruthless than I believed." He moved in the darkness, went back to Hanrahan's prone figure.

Murphy said: "I think they're coming."

They were making some sort of move. He held the revolver in his hand, balancing it. He was the best shot on the Force, holder of many shooting medals. He had no desire to waste bullets. He wanted Lacey—and McNally—and Hi-boy. The others

would be mere hired killers. The Force would gather them up, and handle them as they might not be able to handle Lacey and his lieutenants. Murphy studied the situation, searching his mind for some strategy which would bring the leaders into the open, knowing they would lurk behind and let the paid thugs do the dangerous work.

"For old, unhappy, far-off things." . . . Hanrahan had paid. Tony would pay. But there was another reckoning, on the other side of the coin. His hand went into his pocket, touched the coin.

There was movement behind him. A figure broke from the door. He said: "Jack!"

The light-colored, unmistakable coat moved. The man ran. Murphy yelled: "Come back, you fool!"

It was not Jack, of course. It was Tony, wearing Jack's top-coat. It was Tony, figuring they would kill him, then decamp with all possible haste before the police arrived. It was Tony, seeking to pay his way.

Murphy boiled to the door of the cabin. He yelled in a booming voice, "To the river, Jack!"

Tony swerved as the gunfire began. The river paralleled the tracks, and he made for it. There was a slight declivity in the terrain which Murphy remembered well.

But Murphy knelt, and now he found Jack's gun on the floor. He saw men running. Lacey appeared from behind the car, calling: "Head him off. Cut him down."

MURPHY fired. Lacey reeled, a bulky figure. His two bodyguards spun, and lances of red fire bit the darkness. Murphy laid his shots in low. He moved away from the shack, into the rain, wiping the wet from his face. He fired again.

They were rushing, but he had distracted them. They were coming at him now, to eliminate his fire before they closed in on Tony. Murphy emptied his gun and lifted Jack's, praying it was fully loaded. He carefully picked off one man. Then another. They were not brave, he thought. He dropped a third man.

They broke and ran. Murphy rose and ran toward them. Disdainful of danger, he reloaded as he ran, zigzagging. He saw McNally and Hi-Boy trying to drag Lacey away.

He stopped dead, then. He aimed. He sent a bullet through the head of McNally. Hi-Boy tried to lift a tommy gun. Murphy shot him through the middle. Lacey stumbled half-erect, lifting an automatic pistol.

Murphy said: "Get it up there, Lacey. I want you to get it up there. I want you to have a shot at me, Lacey."

The big man's voice was blurred. "Officer—Murphy." He tried hard to hold the gun straight. He fired.

Murphy also pulled the trigger. Lacey fell back against the car. His shot went wild. He dropped the gun and said in a plaintive voice: "That one—hurt." He clasped his hands across his middle and doubled over on his face.

There was a siren screaming. A red police light flashed on and off. In the yards there was silence except for the groans of a wounded man. Murphy unlimbered his flashlight, running for the river.

He saw the light-colored coat on the ground, and raced to it. Tony was beneath it, white-faced, bleeding. Murphy picked him up and went through the rain to the shack. There wasn't much time before the Force would be there, and Commissioner Avery, that dour man, asking questions. He placed Tony beside Jack, and stood holding the flashlight so that the beam played upon the faces of both of his boyhood companions.

"For old, unhappy, far-off things," he muttered.

JACK HANRAHAN opened his eyes. He said feebly: "What—what happened? Why are you always repeatin' that crummy old line, Murph?"

"So you're alive?" said Murphy.

"Just about," said Hanrahan. "Is that Tony beside me?"

"He didn't cross you," said Murphy. "They tried to make you believe that. Then Tony tried to pay up for the whole thing. Alone—in your coat! To save you and me! He found out you were alive, and he never told me. Just took off in your coat."

"They got him?"

Tony moved, still unconscious. His right hand opened. The flashlight caught a dull gleam, and Murphy bent and gently took the coin with the square hole in the middle from its limp clutch.

Murphy said: "They got him like they got you. They put lead in him. But he'll live. You know he will live, like you will live."

"Tony. He didn't cross me." Hanrahan's face relaxed. The two of them, lying there wounded, looked like boys, Murphy thought suddenly. In their extremity the lines and ravages of the years dropped away from them. They were boys who had exchanged talismans many years before, and who had believed in them, and in the end, by whatever devious means, had tried to remain true to them.

There was rain on Murphy's face, but one drop which ran down into his mouth tasted salty; and there is, he knew, no salt in raindrops. And he wasn't lonely in his heart any more.



Murphy extracted the gun from its holster with the ease of a magician taking a rabbit from a hat. McNally screeched: "I got a permit for that gat."

THE CAPTAIN OF A SHIP AT SEA HAS SUPREME COMMAND. IN HIS DISPUTE WITH THE TROOP COMMANDER, DID HE OVERSTEP HIS AUTHORITY?

THE ship *Irenic* was making an easy seventeen and a half knots, and was well into the Yellow Sea when the message came. An A.B. delivered it to Captain Jack Haig, who was breakfasting in the saloon.

The Captain's habitually expressionless face registered nothing except perhaps a degree less of expression as he read the sheet. He showed it to the second mate, Mr. Hendricks, who grunted and then passed it back to the messenger.

"Tell Mr. Jones to alter course for this position," Jack Haig ordered. He turned to Mr. Hendricks. "I'll want to look at a chart, Mister. These are bad waters inshore."

Farther down the white-spread table a tall man wearing the two stars of a major general raised his head. "Alter course, Captain?" he said in a loud flat voice. "Go inshore?"

"Air transport ditched just off the beach," the Captain said. "Twenty-five passengers and crew. We'll have to pick them up." It was an assertion of fact.

General Napier had risen. He was a lean whiplash of a man, craggily handsome; but now his face was darkening with anger. The loud flat voice had a note of incredulity as he said: "You can't be serious, Captain Haig."

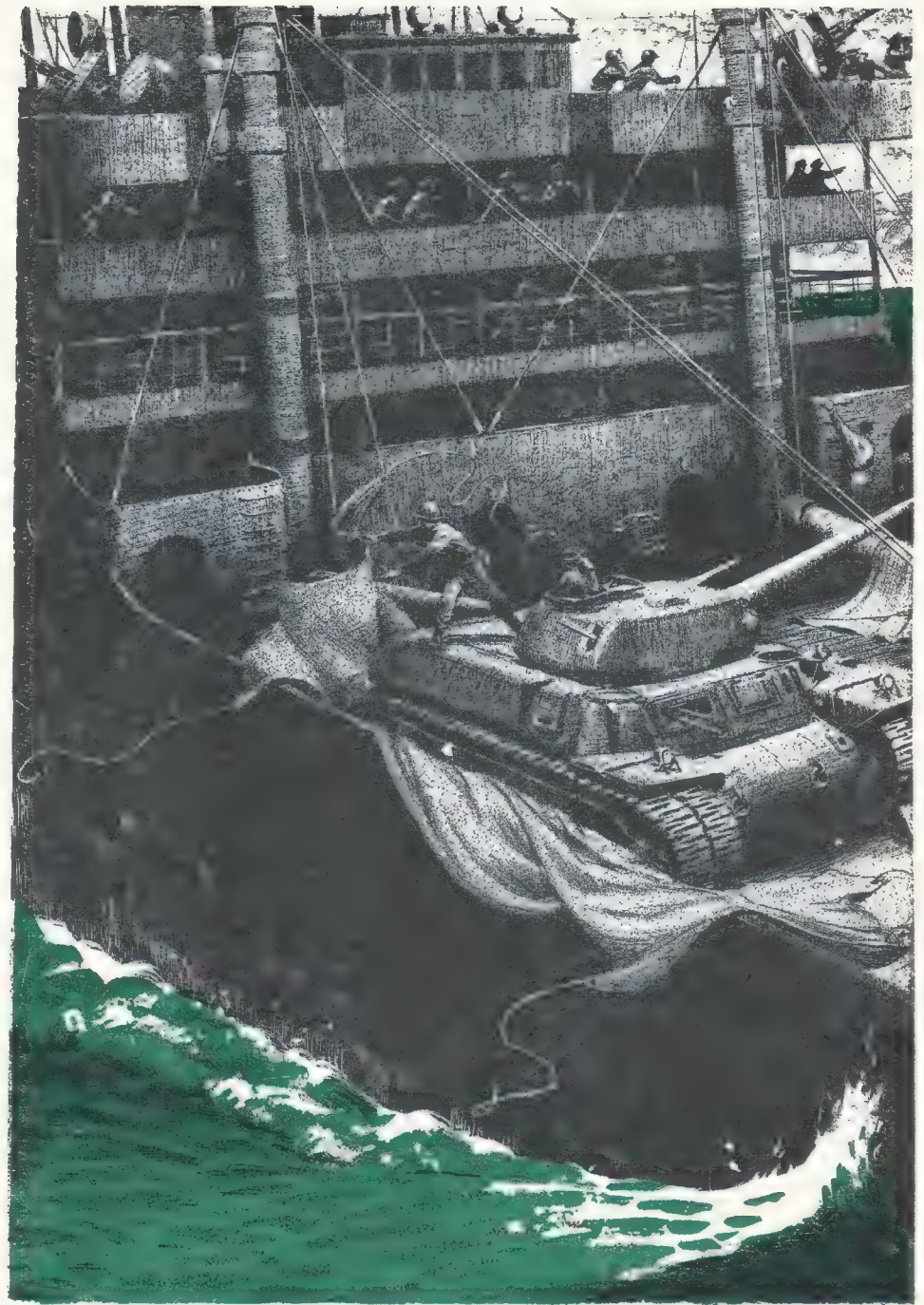
"I am not in the habit of changing course for the sake of amusement, Mister." Jack Haig was brusque.

A Colonel seated beside the General said: "*General, Captain. Not Mister.*" He seemed about to amplify it, but a palpable surge of naked enmity between the two commanders stopped him.

"I forbid it," General Napier said. "Do you hear me, Captain Haig? Countermand that order."

Jack Haig eased his great bulk back into his chair. If his temper was rising, only the chilled blue of his eyes showed it. He said mildly: "We are the nearest ship, Mister—in fact, the only ship that can reach those people in reasonable time. If they drift ashore, you know what the Communists will do to them. And if they don't get ashore, it'll be a gunboat or death by exposure for them."

The General strode down between the two long mess tables. "Captain," he said urgently, "this is a military expedition. A rendezvous has been set. Your ship is carrying all the armor for my beachhead. Thousands of lives are involved. You cannot



COMBINED

jeopardize those lives for the sake of twenty-five or thirty."

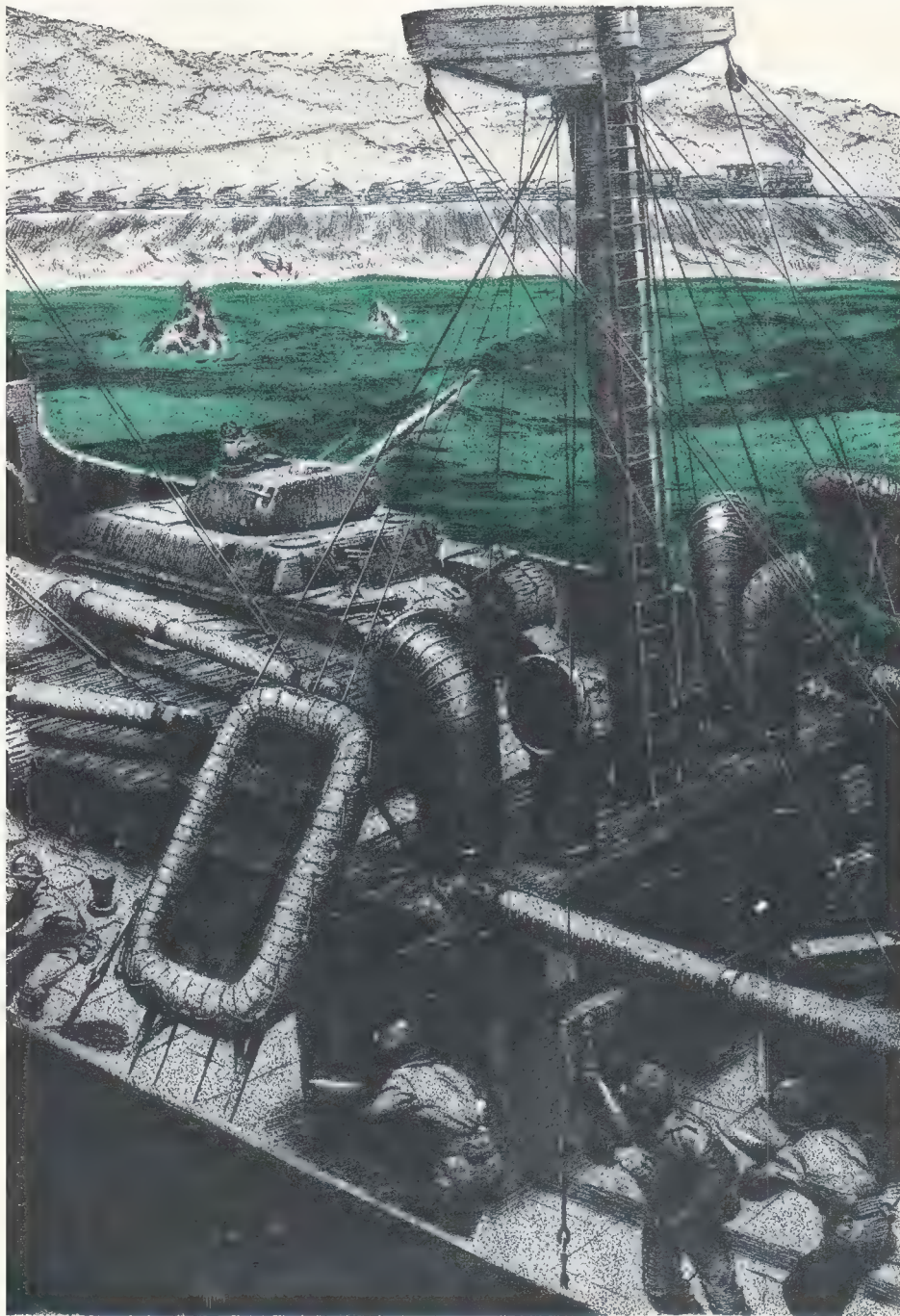
"Twenty-five civilians, Mister. Including three women. An unarmed airplane, shot up by Red fighters, forced to ditch."

The rhythm of *Irenic's* easy motion was changing. She heeled slightly as she answered her helm to the new course. The hardly appreciable centrifugation, signaling the ship's disobedience to his will, galvanized the

General. His fist slammed down on the table.

"You will obey my order!" The loud flat voice, edged with rage, carried beyond the saloon and echoed back from the narrow alleyways.

"There is no risk involved," Jack Haig said, "beyond the ordinary." There was eruptiveness beneath his calm. "You think I don't know what I'm doing? I have enough reserve speed to manage this, Mister. The



by JOHN
F. WALLACE

Illustrated by Brendan Lynch

The General leaned over the back of one of the revolving chairs, and his hands wrapped whitely around it. "Captain," he grated, "for the last time: Put this ship back on its course. If you refuse, I promise you that I will never rest until I see you broken."

Jack Haig's wide face tightened, and color leaped to his cheeks. "The last recourse of the military mind," he said. He stepped lightly away from the door, confronted the General.

"The decision is made, General, with due consideration for all factors involved." The Captain's full lips flattened against his teeth. "Don't expect me to reverse myself," he said harshly. "It won't happen."

He turned and pushed his way out of the saloon, thrusting aside the group of Army officers just entering. His rapid tread sounded on the companionway.

The General swore, helplessly.

AT forty-five, Jack Haig might have been anywhere between forty and sixty. He was a silky-haired ash-blond giant. Well over six feet in height, he started wide and thick and heavy at the shoulders and stayed wide and thick and heavy all the way down. His square face, pale and full-lipped, was just short of brutal. It was the face of a man who had an incandescent temper well in hand.

It was a face many men had hated. Jack Haig's love was his ship; his pride was his place in the merchant service. With men he was ruthlessly overbearing. He refused to listen to excuses and scorned apology. Only men of great strength and integrity could come to terms with him, but those who did never willingly separated from his command. By a process of rugged survival that had started when he took command of *Irenic* before Pearl Harbor, he now had a crew as tough and prideful and efficient as himself.

He had clashed at once with the General. General Napier had flown down to a nameless island off the China coast to borrow back some heavy lend-lease tanks for his beach-head. *Irenic* was the only ship in the vicinity with heavy lift gear to handle the tanks, the only ship available with enough speed to meet the General's tight schedule.

There had been words about the loading. There had been further words when the General discovered

COMMAND

most time that you'll lose will be only minutes."

"Minutes! Man, five minutes can break a military operation. And it's not the point, anyway. My God," the General said in real agony, and he turned to the Colonel. "You heard him say these are dangerous waters close to shore. You heard him give the order to go in. Get my staff, Colonel. There must be some action I can take on this."

Jack Haig heaved to his feet and walked to the saloon door. "Action, Mister? Action against the command of a ship at sea?" He stepped aside to let the agitated Colonel out.

"A ship has her duty, General," the Captain said. "You and your tanks and your landing are her duty, and she will execute it. But she will not dirty herself by leaving helpless human beings to die because you say she must."

that *Irenic*, half loaded to begin with, could not accommodate all of the tanks in her holds and would have to carry six as a deckload. The antagonism between the two men was sealed when the General, making no attempt to conceal his distrust from Jack Haig, canceled his flight back to northern Korea and accompanied the precious tanks on shipboard. . . .

Irenic, not very far out, made a landfall within an hour. Lookouts in the crosstrees reported no sign of the airplane's rubber life-rafts.

The chart showed a rugged coastline. A long line of reefs and shoals and jagged rock and islands paralleled the coast at this point, with a kind of elongated lagoon in their lee. The lagoon showed a channel of navigable water.

"We go in here," Jack Haig said. He tapped the chart with a pencil. "If that pilot had any control left, that's where he'd've ditched. We go up the coast here." The pencil traced through the deep water. "And here's our channel out. If they aren't there, we'll have to proceed to the rendezvous."

"Tricky," commented Mr. March, the chief officer. Mr. Hendricks vented a characteristic grunt.

CAPTAIN HAIG stepped into the wheelhouse. "Mr. Jones, I'm relieving you to take her in. Stand by the telegraphs. Slow ahead. Steady as you go," he said to the man at the wheel.

The General and one or two of his officers had come up into the bridge. It was a courtesy Jack Haig had automatically afforded his distinguished passenger at the beginning of the voyage. Now the General said: "No sign of your survivors, Captain?"

Captain Haig gestured ahead. "In there, I reckon."

"You're sending in your smallboats, I presume." The General was trying to keep things on an unemotional level.

"Time is of the essence, General. It'd take all day for smallboats to search in there. Besides, the currents are too heavy."

"But you'll take the ship in?" The flat voice was loud again.

Jack Haig had been photographically holding the details of the chart in his mind, the crooked course of deep water that would take him through the barrier. He said roughly: "Take a look at those rocks, Mister. We just have to touch one, and there'll be no rescue. And no rendezvous for you, either. So there'll be no further unnecessary conversation in the bridge."

"General, Captain, please! Not Mister." It was the same Colonel, getting himself worked up over the Captain's disrespect.

"Shut up," Jack Haig said.

The first of the great sharp rocks now loomed dead ahead of *Irenic's* stem as she creamed heavily down upon it. The man at the wheel, after one glance, jerked his eyes down to the binnacle. At the telegraphs, the third mate turned a little white and bit his lip. He gripped the handles hard.

"My God," General Napier's voice broke into the waiting silence: "By God, Captain, you're going to hit that rock."

Jack Haig stared ahead, unhearing. His mind now was a calculating machine. All factors of tide and current had been read into the machine. All factors of the ship's responses, her speed, her turning circle, had been read in. And like an overall pattern lay the positions of the rocks, the inflexible director of the machine by which it made its final calculations or perished.

The General could not conceal his agitation. "You madman!" His voice was very loud. He glanced around, his tongue darting out to touch his lips. "Get out of this while you still have the chance, Captain Haig," the General said.

Something spasmodic happened to Jack Haig's face.

"Silence in the bridge!" Mr. Jones, the youthful third mate, turned savagely on the General.

"Port stop," Jack Haig said. The great tooth of rock now seemed directly under *Irenic's* stem. "Right rudder."

The rock swung in an accelerating arc, seeming to be in motion itself as the current took the ship and drifted her away from it. Other fangs now threatened her from the starboard hand as she bore down with a broadside motion.

"Port full astern. Hard left rudder." She shook as the vibrations of her straining propellers reached the bridge in rubbery waves. The line of deadly rock, reaching for her delicate shell, hesitated.

"All ahead full." Almost flippantly *Irenic* swung her stern and climbed away from her danger, her head facing into new threats.

It was a devil's gantlet, with all the rules in favor of the devil. In the bridge the silence was profound, accented rather than broken by Jack Haig's communication with the ship, the light-voiced impersonal answers of the man at the wheel. The chain of command, the rigid control that was extended from the gigantic figure of the Captain to the farthestmost parts of the ship, was a thing of mingled delicacy and strength. It was the kind of generalship the General could recognize, and he restrained himself for the moment.

But with every jutting crag a threat to the safety of men committed to pour ashore in the beachhead, with every twist of *Irenic's* hull a reprieve to his own career, the General could not remain a spectator. When open water appeared ahead and the ship was gathering herself for the run through the inner barrier, he strode determinedly to the wheelhouse.

He said harshly: "Captain Haig, take your ship out to sea again. That's an order."

Jack Haig's mouth thinned. He pointed to the glassed notice that forbade the presence of persons not necessary to the navigation of the ship in the bridge. "See that sign, General? That's the law. And it means you."

"Colonel Enright!" The General had come to a decision. "Order the ship's radio officer to communicate with the Navy. If he refuses, have one of your own men do it!"

BUT Captain Haig was prepared for this. He nodded to Chief Officer March, who beckoned several husky seamen up the after bridge ladder. The General and his officers found themselves walled in.

"You offer physical violence, Captain?" the General shouted.

"You offer piracy, Mister."

The General thrust violently at the unyielding ring of seamen. Jack Haig kept his eyes straight ahead. A light perspiration was beginning to glaze his face. Strain enough, taking a ship through this, without having it compounded. "Keep them on the bridge," he said to Mr. March. "If those soldiers learn about this, we'll have a riot on our hands."

An island lay off their starboard hand. Beyond it lay rocks and a second island. They were part of the inner barrier, and the channel was around the second island. The men in *Irenic's* bridge had a momentary glimpse of the lagoon as she passed abreast of the islands, and at the same time the great orange slick and the rubber life-rafts of the downed airplane.

Jack Haig expelled a great breath. "Mr. Hendricks," he said jubilantly, "tell the bos'n to rig the Jacob's ladder. Nets over the side. And stretchers, in case any of these people are injured."

The first island was sliding astern, the life-rafts passing from view, when the shot came. A sudden roar sounded from the shore, and a small white geyser spouted ahead of the ship's bows. The sound came again, with a screaming overtone, and the second shell exploded close in.

Mr. Hendricks had frozen at the head of the ladder. "All ahead full," Jack Haig shouted. "Mr. Hendricks, take over. Make for the lee of that

island." The Captain plunged out into the starboard wing, fumbling glasses to his eyes. The General was already scanning the shoreline with binoculars.

Another shell plunged close in. Then the firing ceased abruptly.

At first the bare shoreline yielded nothing to Jack Haig's scrutiny. A railroad line paralleled it. An embankment fell away from the line to the beach, and above it was a steep bluff, marked by a rough ascending trail. At one point the steel disappeared under what appeared to be a long line of rubble from a landslide.

"That was a tank firing at us," the General said.

"I don't give a damn what it was." The long pile of rubble along the railway line was beginning to have meaning for the Captain, deadly meaning. "Ring down the engine-room, Mr. Jones," he shouted. "Tell them I want every turn they've got. That's a train of camouflaged flat-cars there. There's a pair of tanks on every one of them!"

He jerked down his glasses. "You're going to get what you want, General," he said bitterly. "There'll be no rescue now!"

Irenic was rapidly gaining the shelter of the second island. The rubber boats had passed from view; the gap exposing her to shore narrowed and closed. Mr. Hendricks swung her head seaward and slowed her.

"Where's all this fine talk about your ship's duty now?" the General said icily.

"My ship's duty is to keep afloat!" Frustration made Jack Haig violent. "You know damn well if I go in there they'll blow us out of the water. Where's your beachhead then?"

"You're worrying about my beachhead—now." The General put a fine edge of sarcasm on it, but his voice was strangely quiet. He frowned in obvious concentration.

JACK HAIG slammed his open palm against the rail. "Damn it, man, there's a difference between a calculated risk and suicide. Those shots were to warn us off. That's why that airplane was shot down. They thought he was observing them!"

"Maybe you're right about the airplane. But that shooting was pure trigger-happiness. I'll bet the guy that fired them is six feet from his head right now." The General turned to the Colonel. "Wasn't that rail line bombed farther north?"

The Colonel said: "Yes sir. That was five days ago."

"So that train's been waiting to get through. Hidden. That's the stuff they'll throw at our landing, Colonel."

Jack Haig shrugged. "You were wanting to use the radio," he said.



"Where's all this fine talk about your ship's duty now?"

"Go ahead. Call up the Air Force. Let them handle it."

"That train'll be gone in ten minutes. They'll find a tunnel or drive off the tanks and disperse them." The General was suddenly very excited. "Go in there, Captain Haig. Make your rescue. I'm going to blast those tanks across the peninsula!"

"You mean those?" Jack Haig jerked his thumb at the tarpaulin-shrouded tanks of *Irenic's* deck.

"Yes! Wake up, man! There isn't a chance that those tanks are crewed. All they want to do is get away."

"One was crewed," the Captain said.

"One. What the hell is one tank?"

Jack Haig shook his head. "This is no battleship. There's at least forty tanks there against our six. It may

be your job to order men to their death, but it's not mine, General."

"Then you leave me no alternative. I'm taking over command of the ship as of now. By force if necessary. We'll settle the legality of it later."

Jack Haig exploded. "I don't listen to that kind of talk on my bridge," he roared. He bore down on the group of officers. "Get the hell below," he shouted. "Get off the bridge before I throw the lot of you over the rail!"

HE shouldered into the General. "Get your soldiers," he said. "Get your guns! Use your force, and see where it gets you. You'll be surprised, Mister, to find out how quickly a seaman forgets his seamanship when somebody tries to drive him."

The General teetered off balance and took a furious step backward. "In plain words," he said, "a strike?" "Call it what you like. It'll be more than you can handle."

The General looked as though he'd just stepped into something dirty. "The last recourse of the merchant marine," he said.

Jack Haig pulled up short. The high furious color drained from his face, leaving it ashy gray.

For a space of seconds the two men faced each other. Then Jack Haig's eyes fell. His hand reached out blindly, fumbled for *Irenic's* rail as a distressed man feels for the hand of his wife.

Irenic's paintwork concealed a thousand scars from Nazi bullets and shells. On this bridge Jack Haig had guided her through the hell of the East Coast in '42, through slaughter on the North Atlantic. To murderous Murmansk. Into the Mediterranean when German air resistance was at its height.

His hand caressed the rail, pulled away. He looked up.

"General," Jack Haig said, "would you say that those shots constituted an attack on my ship?"

The General was not without sensibilities. He was not blind to the torture in Jack Haig's eyes, nor to the kind of decision the Captain was trying to reach.

"I would indeed," he said.

"Would you accept an order to defend this ship while she is engaged in a rescue operation?" Jack Haig grinned suddenly. "Would you, General?"

The General heaved a great sigh. "You can count on it, Captain."

FIVE minutes after her stern had disappeared behind the island, *Irenic's* bows creamed into the channel. Adroitly, she held to the deep water, made the last turn, and came up the lagoon at top speed.

On her decks tank crews had scrambled under the tarpaulins and into the six tanks. GI's were running up with the ninety-millimeter ammunition, and other GI's stood by to rip away the tanks' concealment when the order was given. *Irenic's* crew had been ordered to shelter on her starboard side, and the engine-room was alerted.

They were none too soon. A locomotive at the head of the train was showering sparks in a desperate effort to pick up speed. The train was rolling, heading for a point where the tracks curved away from the shore and disappeared into a rocky defile. Portions of the intricate camouflage were falling away.

"We've got to get that locomotive, quick," the General said to Jack Haig. They were standing together in the port wing.

Jack Haig nodded. "I can give you about ninety seconds more at this speed," he said. "Then there's shallow water."

"Tell me when." The General surveyed the train grimly. "All they want now is to get away," he said. "I'm betting they won't try to shoot until they see us go past those rafts."

He was right. The cheering of the survivors changed to shouts of disappointment as *Irenic* surged between them and the shore without diminishing speed. "Hold on," Jack Haig belted down at them. "We'll be back for you."

He crossed back into the port wing just as a solitary Communist tank at the rear of the train opened fire.

The General had men stationed to relay his orders. "Tanks on the after-deck take that tank that's shooting," he said. "Tanks on the foredeck take the locomotive. Wait for the signal."

Irenic was overhauling the train, drawing abreast of it. Jack Haig's eye was glued to the pelorus. Suddenly he stepped away from it.

"All astern full," he said.

"Open fire!" the General said.

Hands tore at the tarpaulins, and then the tanks were naked on the decks. The guns, like the sniffing snouts of nightmare beasts, lifted and swung, hunting for their prey.

The answering tinkle of the engine-room telegraph sounded frivolously in that moment of deadly silence. Something sighed and blasted aft of the bridge. The concussion staggered

them, and a shower of glass rattled in the chartroom. Then all sound was lost in the crashing broadside. The tanks on *Irenic's* decks bucked on their treads, and the ruptured locomotive blew out its life in a toadstool of pulverized coal and a plume of white steam. It came back at them in a gusty roar and a rattling screech as the lead flatcar mounted the smashed tender. The momentum of the train shoved them along with slow brutality until the whole mass of tangled metal slid off to one side and rolled down the embankment.

At the other end of the train a blazing tank next to a boxcar fell to one side. Men were pouring out of the boxcar, running for the tanks on the flatcars.

"Fire at will," the General said.

The great snouts on the ship's deck swung again, again lanced flame. Rock and soil spouted upward around the slowing train, and a direct hit in the middle twisted it like a broken-backed snake, and it dragged to a stop.

THE chatter of American machine guns joined the heavier concussion of the main armament. Some of the running figures went down, but others had gained the tanks. The air around *Irenic* whimpered gassily; then she shuddered as the shells began to stab into her. But the American guns held to the advantage of the surprise punch. Car after car lurched to the hits, spilled blazing and crazily tumbling tanks down the embankment.

The ship had lost way now, and was presented broadside full to the Communist fire.

"Can you hold this position, Captain? Go a little backward?" the General had to shout.

Jack Haig nodded. "Slow astern," he ordered, and the boil of her propellers died just as her final motion ceased. She began to back slowly. Jack Haig hung anxiously over the after rail, wincing every time she took a hit, conning her with all the skill that was in him. In such waters, in these unpredictable currents and sucking shallows, a ship could take a fatal sheer. Doubly fatal now. A swing of her hull would silence her guns, limited to a narrow angle of fire by her deck fittings and machinery. And a moment's loss of control could pile her up.

The first Communist fire had been indiscriminate. The ship's hull was the target, and she took two dozen hits before the Red gunners steadied down and tried to pick off the American tanks. And now some of the remaining Russian-made heavies fired from their positions on the flatcars. Others got their motors started and crept away like poisoned cockroaches to find shelter in the defile.



Mr. Jones lunged out of the chartroom, holding a broken arm.

General Napier grabbed Jack Haig's shoulder, and shouted for concentrated fire on the escaping tanks. "Can you go forward again?" he yelled in Jack Haig's ear. "I want to keep that angle from closing."

The Captain gave it to Mr. Jones, but only one telegraph acknowledged. The other swung to stop and at the same time *Irenic's* bows began to describe a ponderous circle. Jack Haig steadied her with the helm. The telephone had been shrilling and now Mr. Hendricks left the instrument.

"Chief says the port engine is dead. Fuel line smashed. He's making some water."

The Captain nodded tightly. "Take fire parties," he said. "Tell the bos'n to look alive. She can't take this without burning somewhere."

Two of the escaping tanks were now stopped, smoking. One of the others leaped sidewise and shed its tread like a broken garter. The surviving tank of the four started to come around on the steep slope, daringly trying for the narrow ledge that would carry it up the bluff to safety. Earth and rock fountained under it, and it clawed desperately at its collapsing hold, then rolled down the face of the bluff and smashed back on to the train.

The train was a shattered mass, but still venomous. Five tanks were still in action, and now they hurled themselves away from the blazing length of the train and down the embankment. They came down the beach toward the ship, firing heavily and presenting their frontal armor.

A TANK on *Irenic's* deck took a hit and began to burn. The crew leaped out, slapping at their clothes; A.B.'s with hoses sprayed them down. Another American tank shed its tread in a great lurching leap, twisted, and thudded back on the sagging deck plates. Its gun was silent for a moment, then fired again just as another red shell hit the base of the foremast. The tall steel jumped like a flipped matchstick, re-stepped its mangled end in the deck, and swept down on the wounded tank. The mast broke across the width of the deck, and the tank was driven into the plates. The ship shuddered with the blow of its fall, and at the same time the wheelhouse and port wing disintegrated under two direct hits.

The blow of it took Jack Haig in the chest like a mighty fist, then sucked the breath out of him. His great body whirled into the wheelhouse and smashed head and shoulders through a plywood panel. When he jerked himself out, his bridge was no longer in control of the ship. A vacant-faced A.B., in shock, was on his knees, twirling the loose wheel. The telegraph standard had disappeared.



The wheelhouse and port wing disintegrated under two direct hits.

Jack Haig could not get to his feet. Like a sea lion he flippered along on his belly until he could look out on the wing. Little of the deck remained. The General was lying on his back, his face a mask of blood. One of his officers was standing over him with a look of utter disbelief on his face.

"Mr. March!" Jack Haig called.

Mr. Jones lunged out of the chart-room, holding a broken arm. "His wind's knocked out," he shouted. "I think the mate's all right, but his wind's—"

"The poop, man!" Jack Haig was rasping. "Get emergency steering in. Get her under control, Mister!"

He was sagging, his chin touching the deck. Mr. Jones bent over him.

"Move!" Jack Haig bellowed.

He pushed himself up again. Something wrong with his back. Something had whacked him. He kicked and then grinned, feeling the needling of bruised but not severed nerves. He skidded over to the General.

The General was still lying there, but the officer who'd been standing over him was down. Blast shock was written on his white face.

"Hey, Mister!" Jack Haig grabbed the General's shoulder.

General Napier stirred. "Damned dark down here," he said conversationally.

"You're not down anywhere." Haig fumbled at his shredded shirt, ripped away a piece. He wiped carefully at the General's eyes, then gently lifted

back a flap of the General's scalp. "You been creased, General," he said.

The General sat up and moaned.

Jack Haig wiped at the eyes again. "You see anything now?" he asked anxiously.

"Yeah," the General breathed. "Thanks."

"Shooting's stopped, Mister." Jack Haig skidded along the broken deck and surveyed the beach. "Looks like we won." He twisted, pulling his big legs under him, and rolled to his feet. "Let me give you a hand up."

They cased themselves against a stanchion, the Captain's arm still supporting the General's shoulders. The beach was desolation.

"We won, all right," the General said. He turned to the milling scene on *Irenic's* deck. Flame was dying under the hoses in one blown-out hatch. Seamen with rag-wrapped faces were climbing out of another ruptured hatch, pulling up fire extinguishers.

"Ship's shot up pretty badly," the General said.

"She's had worse," Jack Haig said. His free hand fumbled, closed over the stanchion in a gesture of communication.

"She did her duty," the General said.

Jack Haig grinned. "Not yet," he said. "We came in here for survivors. And when we get them aboard, she has to make your rendezvous for you. You can say she's done her duty then, General."

The FAITHFUL

THE first man on the darkened bus was a guard here at the State prison. Knowing him just well enough to dislike him, Joe Terry pretended to be asleep, and the man edged along the aisle to a rear seat. Next aboard was a fat woman; the bus trembled when she sat down. The third and last passenger settled beside Joe Terry, and he supposed it had been by accident, although he saw her face clearly in the lights from the depot, and she could have seen his.

Her sidewise glance caught his eyes on her, and she asked: "Shot anyone lately?"

"Not lately, Miss Lord," he answered, uncomfortably.

The small face turned toward him was solemn but not sad, youthful but not immature; and he read dislike in her steady look. She marveled: "It remembers my name! Or am I on file somewhere?"

"Not that I know of. Been to see—uh—McCann?"

"McCann. You can forget his name, after ruining his life?" Her bitter whisper barely reached him. "There must be some way to punish without destroying. Eddie no more deserved—no more deserved—"

Emotion choked her. Joe Terry said nothing, thinking: *She's just come from seeing him; naturally she feels bad. And maybe she is beginning to know what he is, and tells herself prison changed him.*

The bus moved jerkily past scattered street lights, gathered speed on the thin edge of town; and as it rushed into the open country, the girl asked in that same low whisper: "Do you sleep well, does your food taste good, knowing what happens to them in there?"

"I've got a job," Joe Terry said woodenly. "Parts I don't like, but I do the job. This McCann—"

Let it go, he told himself. Nothing he could say would shake her conviction that McCann did not have a crooked heart. Joe Terry's memory separated McCann's thread from a thousand others: six service stations robbed in a row had been dropped in Joe Terry's lap; and when his methodical work was done, McCann's partner was in Emergency with a bullet in him—he had missed Joe Terry twice at fifteen feet—and McCann was in custody.



"I know he's not a criminal! And if he had a chance—"

When she spoke again, the girl's tone was normal. "Are you down here on official business?"

"Vacation. Been South to see my folks. What are you doing, Miss Lord?"

She was a waitress, and Joe Terry knew the place; half candy store, half

tea-room. The old honest dollar, he thought, pleased at this confirmation of his original judgment of her character.

McCANN had led him to Christine Lord, but the D.A.'s office had agreed that she was not criminally involved,

by OWEN CAMERON



Illustrated by JOHN McDERMOTT

"I'll listen, and maybe I can help," lied Joe Terry.

and Joe had even kept her picture out of the newspapers.

Yawning, the girl said: "I come down once a month. It's a long trip, though I'd come more often if I could."

She was silent, thinking about it, and the bus rushed through the dark-

ness, mile on mile. Now and then lights of a car flickered over the passengers, who slept, or murmured to one another, or merely sat. The bus heeled over on a turn, and Christine Lord slid against Joe, pulled away with a sleep-confused apology. "I'm sorry. Did I—I was dozing."

"Use me for a pillow."

While she hesitated, he put his arm around her shoulders and drew her against him. For a moment she resisted stiffly, then relaxed. Joe Terry steadied her against the shiplike rocking of the bus, now and then looking down at her young, untroubled face, and wondering, not for the first time, if this were innocence or its perfect mask.

Contact with hundreds of McManns had given Joe Terry a cynical armor; and he knew their girls too, the girls they picked up in dance-halls and bars, the ruthless, selfish, often lovely young girls who all wanted to be in the movies—not actresses, but stars. Only this girl had he remembered as a person.

Now he told himself that it was her face, not any inner qualities, that had led him to help her. She was still waiting for McMann, wasn't she? And she would go along with him, down the hill. Their faces were something they were given, as they might be given money, and which they squandered just as they would squander money.

The bus stopped in a sleeping town to let off a passenger. Christine Lord stirred, and he tightened his arm about her protectively. As the bus moved, her small hand crept into his left hand, on his lap. Startled, he twisted to look down at her face, but she was asleep, surely asleep.

ENDLESSLY, everlastingly, the bus rolled onward, so that even the sensation of motion was lost. Far ahead, the lights of the city made a false dawn, and later there were more cars, and traffic lights. The girl slept, only gasping in some dream, her hand fluttering in Joe's, and did not wake until the bus rumbled into its terminal. Then she sat up, touching hat and hair, staring bewilderedly at him.

"Is it—I was asleep?"

"Good imitation, anyhow."

Her blue eyes had the unfocused brightness of a newly awakened child's eyes, but Joe Terry wondered. Maybe he had been expected to do more than sit holding her. Some of them took that stuff for granted.

He carried his bag and her cheap suitcase through the waiting-room, the girl quick and light beside him. On the sidewalk, he said: "Three A.M. Let's eat."

Christine Lord hesitated, nodded, and a cab carried them uptown. Over ham and eggs they talked casually, and another cab afterward took them to an old district where the houses brooded over a past when every respectable home had an attic and basement. The girl's apartment had been part of the basement, and Joe Terry went in to turn on lights and glance around.

"No burglars," he reported.

She waited beside the open door. "Thank you, policeman."

"I've got a name."

"Mr. Terry. Thank you." She offered her hand, saying in that solemn child's way: "You've been very nice."

Taking the hand, he pulled her to him. She pushed at him ineffectually, then submitted. In the middle of the kiss, it stopped being casual for Joe Terry, but she held herself like a dummy in a store window.

When he released her, she stepped back, hand against cheek, asking coldly: "Does that pay for the meal?"

Something in her eyes, the lift of her chin, evoked a memory, and whatever he had given and taken with the kiss turned to dust. She closed the door after him, not even saying good-night. At the cab, he stood a moment with his head down, then turned to look at the lighted window. As if she had been watching, the light flicked off, and Joe Terry climbed wearily into the cab.

THIS was how it was, and maybe how it would always be, and it kept him out of cheap hotel rooms and even away from the nice girls who must be around somewhere: the thought of Paula, his dead wife.

He did not turn on the lights of his characterless furnished apartment; but after a while he went to bed.

Next morning he slept late, and when he woke, deliberately sent his thoughts into a commonplace channel. Five days' vacation left; time enough for a fishing trip, and he did it all in his mind, down to the sun-burn and the men's talk around a fire at night, knowing all the while he would not go.

He shaved and dressed leisurely, telling himself: stay in town, eat at the fancy spots, see a little night-life. . . .

He would telephone Leo Crossman. Leo and his wife were good companions. But with his hand on the phone, Joe Terry hesitated, looking at his dead wife's picture on the table. Paula smiled at him gently, lovingly, understanding; forever beyond his reach, yet with him forever, so that he was never alone but always lonely.

No wonder people do the Dutch, he thought. Like that cop across the bay

who put his wife's picture over his heart and shot himself through it. *Not me!* he told himself; but there should be a fairer way. *They* should have let him keep her or forget her. Hell to go on needing what you couldn't have; and he could sympathize with Christine Lord. In a way, he was better off. Sooner or later she would discover what a bum her man was.

By now his memory had recovered McMann's likeness: slim, blond, with a straightforward manner that did not go deep. But it had fooled judges—witness his record—and Christine Lord, though who knew for certain what a woman saw when she looked at her man?

JOE had known many McManns—young, selfish, wanting something for nothing, they walked the same road, did the same things. Proud of their toughness, they evaded the hardest fight of all. In eight months or so McMann would be freed, and again an item in police-work. McMann would not change. Only suckers worked, and he would see his sentence not as earned punishment, but as bad luck, even injustice.

Christine Lord saw through McMann's eyes; and Joe Terry wondered how much suffering and degradation she could undergo and still carry her head high.

Perhaps pity brought him into the tea-room that afternoon. A hostess fluttered around him, but he ignored her, standing near the door, neat but bulky in his blue suit, until he had decided which tables Christine served.

She took his order as if he ate there daily, and Joe poked morosely at the fantastic salad, the delicate slice of beef, asking, when she came to learn his choice of desserts:

"Where do you eat? Not this junk?"

For the first time he saw her smile. She all but laughed at him.

"It's really very nice. And part of my salary."

"Let's have supper some place where they use food to eat, not decorate a plate. Like real Italian food?"

She shook her head, and Joe went on: "Look, you think McMann had a bad deal."

"I know he's not a criminal! And if he had a chance—"

"I'll listen, and maybe I can help," lied Joe Terry. His time to help was past. Oh, he had friends, but he wouldn't strain their good will for anyone like McMann.

Christine's look was long and thoughtful, but she nodded. "But I can't go anywhere very grand. I don't have the clothes."

"Wrap a towel around you. What time?"

She told him, and Joe Terry passed the interval sneering at a cops-and-robbers movie.

The restaurant was the front part of an Old North Beach house: a dozen tables, a fireplace, and a fat proprietor named Luigi who trotted panting from the kitchen to their table with special tidbits. He had sorrowed with Joe Terry these last two years, and it gladdened his heart to see Joe with a pretty girl.

In the kitchen, he sentimentally kissed his mustached wife, crowing: "Good! Good! She's make him human again."

His wife sniffed. "And why should not a man be faithful?"

"A man eats his own heart too long, he dies." Luigi peeked into the dining-room. "Ah, ah! He smiles!"

Christine Lord was smiling too. Across the red-and-white tablecloth, she told Joe: "You seem a favorite here."

"I used to come often, with my wife."

"You're married?"

"Not now."

"It didn't take?"

"It took. It— She died two years ago. Auto accident."

He couldn't read the expression in her wise child's eyes. She said only: "That's why you— I know what it's like to be lonely, Joe Terry. Though I'm luckier."

"Let's skip it," he said roughly.

AFTER that he saw her almost every day. Christine talked about McMann, though not much, and mostly when she was dreaming about the future. For now, her attitude said, she and Joe Terry shared loneliness.

Christine liked libraries and museums and art galleries. She enjoyed such things, but also they were free. Joe guessed, and soon learned that she sent money to McCann, denying herself.

Joe Terry would never have looked twice at a painting unless it accurately depicted a familiar scene; but he went with Christine, and began to see what the artists were driving at, and to form his own likes and dislikes. From the library he borrowed books on art, his reward coming when Christine asked, between astonishment and pride:

"Why, Joe! Where did you learn that?"

"Ah, just picked it up," he'd say.

Christine had gone to art-school, but she said she had no talent. For her, a little house and a whole mess of kids and a husband to care for, and— Her voice trailed off, and Joe knew she was thinking about McMann.

Joe gave himself a number of reasons for seeing Christine, but the real



reason, the one he wouldn't look at, was that his heart was thawing, and in it was sprouting a seed he had never planted, never wanted after Paula's death.

Sometimes he caught himself staring at Christine, wondering how she could be so like Paula, yet so different. Paula had been tall; Christine just missed being tiny, but she gave the same impression of slim straightness. Paula had been fair; Christine was dark, but at times she looked at him with Paula's serious, understanding eyes, and his heart turned over. They both had a dignity that didn't stem from age or actions; they could ride the merry-go-round, or walk the street munching popcorn, and never lose it.

Christine's parents were dead; her two brothers lived in the Middle West. A girl supporting herself, living alone, above all, a girl involved with McMann, could be no innocent lamb; but either none of it had touched her, or she was the world's best actress.

Joe Terry hesitated, looking at his dead wife's picture. He was never alone but always lonely.

Joe took her salmon-fishing. She caught a nineteen-pounder, and for days he saw her as she had looked when he gaffed it: pink as a kid, and her eyes so bright, and the wind whipping the dark hair across her face. It made Joe ache inside, the way he had hurt the first months after losing Paula; but still he wouldn't admit to himself what had happened.

HE was forced to do that, the evening he waited for her on the corner outside the tea-room—they no longer bothered to make dates—and she didn't appear. In the tea-room they knew only that she had asked for an extra day off, and the people who lived above her knew less. A familiar, terrible fear rose in Joe, clawing at his sanity, and he phoned the hospitals, shivering and sweating at the same time. He had gone through this

nightmare once before, the night Paula—

Then he had it. Visitors' day at the prison! Last night she had looked at him oddly, saying: "You know it's been a month since we met on the bus?" And when they said good-night, she had squeezed his hand and told him: "Take it easy for a couple of days, Joe." But he had muffed it; he'd said sure, sure; and because she thought about McMann all the time, she imagined the day meant something to him too.

Joe Terry sweated out a bad night. Not only another man's girl, but a criminal's girl—not that she had ever given him a nickel's worth of encouragement. Before morning he concluded that the only thing was not to see her, but forget her. It was a hard decision, but to act on it was impossible; and three days later he was waiting on the corner again.

Her face brightened when she saw him, and she cried, "Where have you been? I missed you, Joe," but not in

a way that meant anything, though he listened for overtones. Joe asked casually about McMann, and she said he was pretty blue, and that was that.

Joe started paying for the pleasant times. He despised himself, and for balance, despised Christine. Nights when thoughts of her wouldn't let him sleep, he cursed her as just another tramp with a pretty face. How could she be mixed up with McMann and not be a tramp?

He put that to the test in a taxi, taking her home after their third fishing-trip. Christine leaned against him, sighing: "Gosh, I'm tired. But it was a wonderful day!"

Joe put his arm around her and turned her face toward him, looking first for the tramp in it. The kiss, as it had that first time, changed from casual to wonderful between heartbeats; and all the pain and trouble in him melted and flowed away.

Christine didn't stir, even when his hand stroked down from her shoul-

der, but he tasted salt. She was crying, eyes closed, and when he asked roughly what was wrong, she merely shook her head, and meanness grew in him.

At last she said: "I just—I didn't want it to be like this."

"Like what?" he growled. Another headshake was his answer, and he said, "Oh, hell," and put his shoulder toward her, staring glumly out at the traffic. He let her get out of the cab alone, and she hesitated on the sidewalk.

"Well. . . . Thanks, Joe," she said in a small voice.

"For what?"

"Everything." She went quickly to her apartment. The cabby turned to squint at Joe, who growled: "What're you looking at?"

"Wondering where to, Jack. No hurry, though."

All the way home and most of the night Joe told himself: *You can't go on this way. But you couldn't stop,*

either. In the morning he woke with the answer and the clock's alarm both loud in his head, and told himself:

"No, I can't stop it, but *he* could." Even if she went away with McMann, it would be better than this.

LATER he went over the record and learned that another charge hanging over McMann might be dropped because of witness trouble. Joe played with the idea of working to keep it fresh, but common sense came to the side of his conscience: Christine would wait, one year or ten years.

When he told her that wire-pulling might have McMann out in a month, Christine was at first stunned, then cried and kissed him. Joe Terry took it woodenly.

There was little daily progress to report, because the law moves slowly, but Joe invented conversations with this and that one, to see her glow, and afterward cursed himself for the world's biggest fool.



"Send me up, go after my girl!" McMann's voice rose, working himself up to the deadly impulse.

McMann was a bigger, though: he made a beat. The prisoner who escaped with him was taken in less than twelve hours, but McMann got clear. The news made Joe Terry act more like a cop than a friend, but if Christine had any guilty knowledge, she hid it perfectly.

"Of course I didn't know!" she told Joe. And she wailed: "Oh, why did he?"

"You've been crying, haven't you?"

"Who wouldn't? Just when everything was going right!"

"If you help him, you'll be in big trouble."

"Trouble! Do you think I'd care for—" She broke off warily. "He wouldn't come here."

But he might, was the thought. Joe considered having her watched, but if he saw her every day, he was sure her face would tell him when McMann came.

FRIDAY was Christine's day off; invariably they spent it on the waterfront, looking at the big freighters with strange names, or at sleek yachts or tubby fishing-boats. Joe called in his own car, and Christine would be watching and come out of the house almost before he stopped, her quick walk only one step from an eager run. But this day he had to knock, and when she opened the door, her eyes widened as though until this moment she had forgotten Joe Terry's existence.

"Joe! Oh, I—I can't go. A splitting headache—I was lying down." She came out of the apartment, closing the door, drawing Joe with her to the sidewalk. "No, nothing you can do. Just let it wear off. I'll phone you later."

"Anyone nursing you?" he asked casually.

"What made you think— Oh, the radio! You must have heard the radio."

One thing sure, thought Joe. She has never lied to me before, if she's this poor at it. After some words of sympathy he drove away, but he parked the coupé around the corner and sat a while, bleak of face. The one person in his world who should not be spied upon or suspected was Christine; but he knew who was with her, clearly as if he'd seen McMann. Walking back to the house next door, he went through a narrow service alley to the backyard and vaulted the fence. Christine's apartment was in front of the basement; the rear was a cluttered storage-room, with a wide path to her kitchen door.

Moving without furtiveness, but noiseless as a shadow, Joe hesitated slightly before turning the knob. The tiny kitchen was empty, but as he crossed it, he heard Christine's voice

in the front room, and a man's surly growl.

"I'd like to see the cop who sold you that yarn."

"Why not?" said Joe Terry, stepping into the room.

Christine's pale, strained features showed fear and, Joe thought, relief. She counted on his help. The slim, blond man on the couch said in a false tone:

"If you don't feel well, Miss Lord, maybe I should—" He saw it was no good, and stared at Joe Terry with trapped hate.

Christine breathed: "Ah, Joe, you'll help us?"

McMann gave her a bitter glance. "I get it. Joe? You've been seeing him ever since he sent me up?"

She forgot Joe Terry then, going to McMann and putting her hands on his shoulders, saying no word, though Joe could guess what she was telling him with her eyes. McMann wouldn't see it, craning past her to watch Joe. The girl turned round, but stayed beside McMann. Her face was openly troubled.

"What'll you do, Joe?"

Joe Terry lit a cigarette and sat down. "Better to give himself up. That'll count for him."

McMann rasped: "Too late for that."

"Too late," echoed Christine, but her eyes hoped.

Joe said: "It's not too late, unless you—" He scowled at McMann's clothes. "Where'd you get that suit?"

"Made a raise."

JOE TERRY'S memory came up with an item from the police-bulletin: *Yesterday a farmer found a body in his field. Well-dressed man of sixty, head crushed, pockets cleaned. Car-tracks from highway to—*

"Where's the car?" he asked. "Did you hitch a ride with him?"

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"There'll be prints in the car." Joe Terry looked somberly at Christine. "So he had that one more chance, and you see what he did with it."

"He wouldn't! Oh, Eddie, say you didn't."

McMann looked at her venomously. "Your cop friend will pin it on me, anyhow. I come here for help, and you've got the place covered with cops!"

"Just Joe. He'll help us. If you—"

McMann's bright stare went to Joe. "You alone?"

Joe Terry nodded absently. "I'll help you all I can, though if he's killed a man—"

McMann stood up. From his pocket he jerked a small pistol, and crowed triumphantly. "Sucker! Don't move—I could put one of these .22



"I come here for help, and the place is covered with cops!"

pills through your eye from here." He grinned at Christine. "Maybe this is our break."

She stared at the weapon. "Where did you get that?"

"Off the guy. And three hundred bucks. I ditched the car."

Christine raised her stricken face to his. "Then—oh, why? Why couldn't you have waited?"

"It was him or me when he pulled this gun. What else could I do? Let him shoot me?"

"But in a month you'd have been free to—"

"Nuts! They were waiting to rap me again, I told you!"

"No! Joe had fixed all that."

"Wake up, Chris! What does he care about me? He was working on you. Would he want me around?"

She shook her head, numbly. Joe Terry sat very still, thinking: *Now she's getting it, now if she won't see what he is, she never will.* Opening his fingers, he dropped the cigarette butt, and even that slight movement jerked at McMann's taut nerves, though his voice stayed persuasive.

"His car must be close. Dressed like I am, and you with me, they won't stop us. That's my only chance, Chris. Alone, every highway cop will look me over, and by now my picture—"

"Leave her out of it," Joe Terry said. "She can't help you—you'll only ruin her."

McMann snarled at him, and Christine said without hesitation: "If it will help you, but— Oh, if you'd waited!"

"Don't nag me! Nothing else to do, now, and these people in L. A. are right."

"You'll never reach Los Angeles," Joe Terry told him. "I'll have an alarm out in twenty minutes."

McMann's laugh was a bark. "Will you?"

She has to see it, thought Joe Terry. For the first time in days he thought of Paula, and silently prayed: *Paula, help her. Make her see it.* Aloud, he asked: "How will you stop me?"

"So you'll never—" Something in the way Joe watched Christine warned him in time. "Tie you up for a few hours. That's enough."

"You'll have to do more than that." Joe knew McMann would never leave him here alive, even if he safely could. Once the McManns broke through the mental barrier against killing, discovered what a simple act it was, how powerful it made them, they killed without passion or reason. After all, you can only hang once.

Make Christine see it, he thought, heedless of his own danger if he could prod McMann into the open. But McMann was too clever.

DISMALLY, Christine said: "I have to help him—you see that, Joe. You won't be hurt, unless by thinking I—" She turned to McMann again. "No one comes in here, and if he's tied. . . Can we phone from somewhere, to have him turned loose?"

"Sure, sure."

Christine wanted Joe Terry's understanding. "Perhaps we can get to Mexico or some place, and if we're left alone—"

"Left alone? He's killed a man."

That jolted her, but nothing could knock her loose from loyalty. "It was an accident. Eddie said so. I know how he feels. How would you feel? And Joe, you've shot at least one man—"

Scheming had darkened McMann's eyes, and now he interrupted Christine. "Look, we won't want to stop on the way. Uh—this guy will be tied up, thirsty. Isn't there a store a couple blocks down? Go get us some stuff we can eat on the way."

A falseness in his tone troubled her. She hesitated, and McMann's mask slipped. He snarled: "Go on! You helping me, or not? Got money?"

Christine nodded wordlessly. Coming back from the bedroom with her purse, she glanced from McMann to Joe Terry, almost spoke, and then hurried out of the house.

I can't help her, thought Joe wearily. *She has that picture of him on her heart, and only he can erase it. He'll do it, too, but by that time there won't be much left of Christine.*

"Turn around," said McMann. Something wild shone in his eyes, but

Joe Terry thought coolly: *He won't do it here unless I force him. He won't do it where Christine will see the blood.*

Joe turned, and McMann jabbed the pistol in his back, patting his pockets. As though reading Joe's thoughts, he said: "Chris is a softie, but she's a great kid; she'll wise up. No gun, huh? Into the bedroom."

In the bedroom, Joe faced McMann, who pulled down the folding bed with one hand, took up a pillow.

Joe Terry felt the strain, now. The pillow was to muffle the small gun's report, and then McMann would tip up the bed with Joe dead in it, a place where a body might stay a long time. McMann would tell Christine that Joe had escaped. Maybe she would believe it, maybe not, but she would go with McMann. And she could never turn back.

"On the bed, face down," ordered McMann.

Joe Terry shook his head, less denying McMann than shaking Christine out of it. Thinking of her put him in this very bad fix. Not that he regretted it, but if it was wasted—

"You want it in front? Lie down!"

Joe's look was blank, but every muscle tensed as he watched the wicked whiteness spreading over McMann's face.

"I'd like to see you kick, but she'll be back in ten minutes, which buys you the easy way. Go on, say something!"

Joe's body was a triggered spring, his eyes locked with McMann's to catch the flicker that would precede action. His mind spoke to him calmly, a disinterested onlooker giving advice: A .22 would have to hit center to stop him, and if he moved fast at the last minute, maybe—

"Send me up, go after my girl!" McMann's voice rose; he had forgotten the need for silence, working himself up to the deadly impulse. A hint of sound and motion in the other room cut into his narrowing attention, and was also the touch that released Joe's coiled muscles. The gun cracked harmlessly as he plunged at McMann, carrying them both against the wall, sidewise to the floor. McMann threshed away, and as Joe surged to his knees, he saw McMann had dropped the gun.

CHRISTINE'S cry froze both men. "Stop it! I'll shoot!"

The gun wavered, but her small face was sharp with resolution. McMann exhaled gustily.

"Atta girl! He damn near got me."

"Don't move! I didn't go to the store—I heard you."

McMann had a forehead of brass. "So what? There's no other way, and I wanted to keep you out of it."

"But you said you wouldn't hurt him, and he was trying to help you!"

McMann shrugged, said easily: "If you say so, we'll tie him and leave him."

Joe Terry said in a weary voice: "Not if he gets his hands on that gun. Which is it, Christine? Your own choice, now."

"You or me?" sneered McMann. "Chris won't send me back."

"Not you or me. Something bigger."

"Is it? Is it?" asked Christine.

McMann moved. She pointed the gun at him, and he cried: "Easy. The safety's off. Point it at him, or—here, give it to me."

"Stay where you are, or I'll shoot." Her voice trembled, but she meant it.

"Chris! You wouldn't double-cross me? I came here, counting on you! You can't send me back!"

She looked at Joe Terry. "Can't you say something?"

"No. It's up to you—by yourself."

Christine searched his face, ignoring McMann's whining. Joe showed her nothing, but she inhaled a long, ragged breath, took three quick steps, and gave him the gun. Staring at the floor, she said dully: "I'm sorry, Eddie. You'll never see why I had to." She covered her face with her hands.

McMann's mouth twisted, but the expression on Joe Terry's face blocked his ugly speech, and he shuffled to the door. Joe went along, without a word or look for Christine. She would have to go through this alone, but she had taken the first big step.

On the way downtown with McMann, he told himself: *She'll get through all right. I can't do anything except wait, and I'll wait, and if—*

FOR five days she came from the tea-room and stonily passed by Joe Terry; but on the sixth she stopped, and with hardly a word spoken, they walked across town, up a little hill where there was a square of grass, and benches that overlooked the bay.

Joe Terry took off his hat and said humbly: "I couldn't ask you to do it for me. That would always have been there."

She nodded, the wise child's eyes deeply searching his own. "I know. The hard way was the good way."

"But I'll tell you how it is with me," Joe went on huskily. "It started the first time I saw you. And after I held you on the bus. . . I'm going to be in a hell of a fix, if you don't want me."

This kiss didn't even start casually, and from there it went on forever and ever. A fat man and his thin wife saw them clinging together, and when Joe dropped his hat, the man snickered, but his wife didn't. She sighed.



The FLARE

The author's own P.T. boat was sunk off Savo Island; and he writes this moving story from his own experience.

by JOHN CLAGETT

THE moon had set behind Savo Island, and a squall was swooping down from the northwest, the same direction whence air scouts had spotted a force of Japanese destroyers coming down the Slot. The sea and weather around Guadalcanal were as changeable as the fortunes of men—and as choppy waves sent his motor torpedo boat into an unrhythmic dance, Martin Lamont again felt fear.

The island smell of fruit, flowers, growth and wood smoke replaced, fleetingly, the salt of spray and the acrid smell of exhaust. This was the closest point of the patrol course to Savo Island and the point at which they reversed course on this patrol.

"Bring her around, Gordon," Lamont said to his quartermaster. "Christ, what weather we've got!"

"They bring squalls with 'em, Skipper. Dunno how they do it. It's a

bad course coming up, too; right into the wind. Can you see anything, sir?"

"Not in this rain. My glasses've got so much water on 'em that it looks like— Wish we had some light."

He tried to keep his voice light and easy, but his dread broke through, and the quartermaster could hear the deep worry in his tones. That didn't particularly affect the quartermaster. He was a veteran of a good many fights, and had long ago realized that



fear was a thing that naturally accompanied an intelligent man into danger. The thing was, don't let it get on top; then forget it, once the fight's over.

It was different with the radioman, Kid Luvrak. He was new to it, and the disturbance he heard in the Lieutenant's voice immediately convinced him that his own fears were justified.

THE wind howled down, rain laced across the sky and lightning flashed to the north, showing fleetingly the tossing black water and the mountain-spined mass of Guadalcanal. It lasted just long enough for fancy to half-see the shapes of a dozen ships with guns and searchlights ready to find and pierce and burn the frail mass of wood and metal upon which these men stood.

Blackness redescended, thrice multiplied.

Martin's exec, the only other officer on the boat, pushed his way onto the bridge. He found the Skipper only by position and feel.

"Wish you'd come down a minute and check our course, Martin. I'm pretty sure of those reefs, but I'd like to have help on it."

"Okay, Jake," replied Lamont, trying to keep the eagerness from his voice. "Take over up here." He waited a moment longer for Jake Currer's eyes to accustom themselves to the dark, then swung through the narrow hatch, closed it, and switched on the light. The chartroom was small and crowded, but it was dry. The ports were blacked out, and he lit a cigarette with satisfaction. Rain crackled on the plywood canopy above his head. The warm realization of at least temporary relinquishment of responsibility swept over him as he checked their position. He switched

off the light, yet lingered still in the warm, dry darkness. He knew there was no safety or shelter here, but the illusion of both filled his mind. Real terror swept over him as for a moment he found himself unable to accomplish the simple act of opening the hatch and climbing out into the cockpit. He gritted his teeth; sweat broke out on his face; and he lunged on deck like a football player in action. His hands were shaking as he moved close to Currer.

"Can't go below any more," he told himself desperately. "If I do, I'll never be able to come out into this again." And he knew it was the truth. For Martin Lamont felt himself to be a coward.

The two officers stood side by side, searching the night with binoculars. The pounding motion of the boat swayed them against each other and the cockpit's sides; rain and salt spray poured on them in sheets. The phosphorescent figures and hands on the three engine speed dials above the throttles were the only things to be plainly seen.

"Wish we had some light!" said Martin Lamont again, and his voice quivered.

"Well there's one thing you—What's that? I hear something!"

"Yes, I hear it. It's a plane! What the devil is—"

The question wasn't finished; in the heavens directly above them a vivid speck of green light appeared. It grew and expanded, and flamed into a powerful flare. Its reflections cast wavering shadows on the bottoms of the rain-clouds above it, and its downward thrusting green light impaled the PT boat in the naked center of a spotlight miles across!

"Oh, God!" groaned Lamont to himself. "Can I stand it? Can I?"

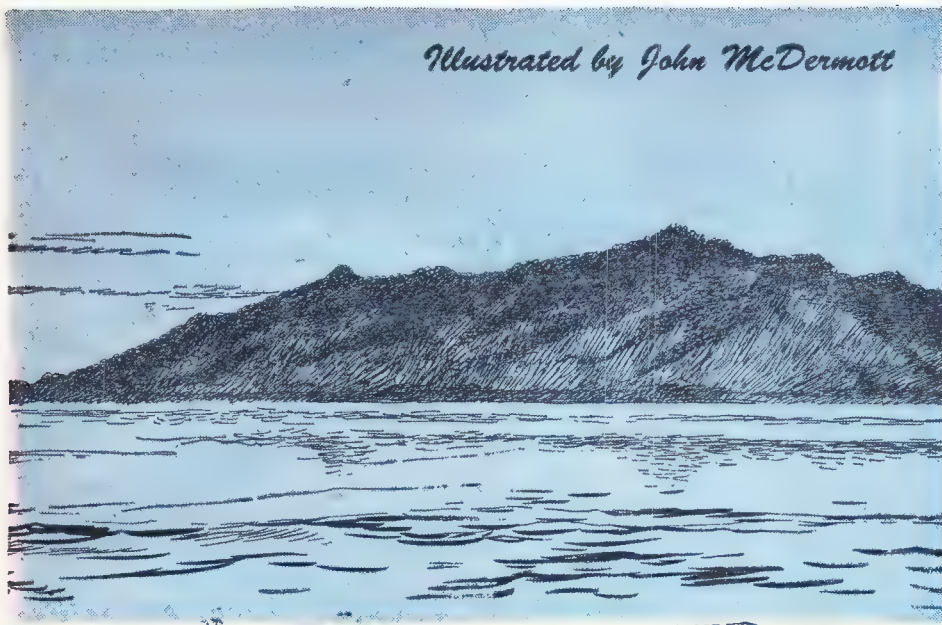
He placed both hands on the hatchway and pushed back with all his strength. He could not go below, not for an instant. If he did, he was lost. And there was nothing to do, nothing but to continue at course and speed, hoping that the flare was random, and that the boat, at low speed among the white-topped waves, would be undetected.

"Jeez! Ain't we gonna do nothin'?" whimpered Luvrak, half aloud. Gordon heard the mutter, and spared a hand from the wheel to clasp momentarily the trembling arm of the boy. The touch soothed Luvrak: Gordon was an old hand, a veteran, though young. It was good to know that the quartermaster wasn't afraid.

But Gordon was afraid, desperately so. For while that flare hung in the sky, the PT's only armor, darkness, was gone. From past experience he *knew* that at any second a swarm of tracers might pound into them, a bomb might land on their decks. Or, as enemy ships were known to be close, a Jap destroyer might be waiting in the edge of the darkness with machine guns and 4.7s trained on them this moment, and with the commence-fire order trembling on the lips of a Jap gunnery officer.

BUT he'd been afraid before—many times. He had become a sort of philosopher in fear. It was present, with all men who knew the score when the shooting started. Gordon often thought of courage as a graph. It started mighty low with most, just before the first scrap. The line then went lower and lower, with strain and fear of fear. With a few it went right on down to the bottom, and they broke early. With most, the line of courage reached a certain low, a point of fear and strain. "Like your point

Illustrated by John McDermott



of low luck in a poker game," he thought. Through that point the line began to climb. Courage grew, and though you were afraid in every fight, you knew you could control it, so you were able to forget it. For a while it mounted higher and higher through each test. He was in that part of the graph now.

But for every man, in every graph, there came a point, seemingly when courage was at its highest point, when the gallantly ascending line faltered, dipped, and if exposed to death again, broke and fell. Then came death, or a psycho case, or a man branded a coward by those who didn't know. Gordon knew that if he fought long enough, he'd hit the point some day.

"But not yet, bucko," he murmured to himself, and alternately wiped the cold perspiration from his hands so the wheel wouldn't slip.

MR. CURRER, there, now was on the bad part of the curve, Gordon reckoned. He'd been in the flotilla a long time, was a good man. Then his boat had been blasted to pieces just a week ago, and Currer spent the night in the water. Sharks got two men who were bleeding. They were short of officers, and Ensign Currer was out again, though he shouldn't have been. Now he said not a word, but cowered against the dashboard, holding on to his remnants of courage with both hands.

Martin Lamont didn't know about Gordon's graph. It would have comforted him perhaps, had he known, for Martin was now at that low point of courage, the point of decision, from which a man either found himself and controlled his natural fear, or lost control and broke.

He'd thought he'd reached the bottom on his first combat patrol two

weeks before. He'd been nervous when he knew that in the dark night Japanese destroyers and transports were approaching. Their arrival off Cape Espérance filled him with indescribable sensations, but he directed his boat for the enemy's radioed location, and fought to conquer the cold lump forming in his stomach. The first angry red flashes of gunfire, the searchlight burning on in deadly brilliance, the seething streams of leisurely red baseballs that were tracer-marked machine-gun fire, all these filled him with a gunpowder-smelling, soul-freezing fear, an indignation that man should be asked to take his beloved and only body and life into that cauldron.

But he was still in control; the battle moved on to him; it was close. He was in a good spot for a shot, dead ahead of the embattled column. He shoved the throttles forward to move into better firing position. The engines answered with their deep surge of power, and the PT boat was a living thing. Martin regained some confidence as he felt the power beneath his hand. But suddenly the engines coughed, roared again, coughed—and died. The silence was ear-splitting, broken, for a moment, only by the futile screams of the starting mechanisms, trying to bring the engines to fire again. Clogged feed-lines! The nightmare of every PT crew operating from inadequate base facilities. The boat rolled crazily in the offshore chop. The battle roared louder. He could see the bow wave of the leading destroyer! They'd spot him in a moment, dead helpless on the water, and he'd never know the warmth of life and love again. He lost control and cried over the radio for help—help that could not be given. He felt nothing but fear.

And in that moment of terror, the Jap column changed course, discouraged by the heavy opposition, counter-marched to the rear, and Lamont and his boat were saved. . . .

No one said anything directly to him, but he heard murmurs.

"Pretty tough spot for a new officer, but he oughtn't 've blown up like that. Gonna send him out again, Commander?" he heard Jet Bennett ask Commander Clark the next day. He hadn't heard the Commander's answer, but he'd been sent out again. There hadn't been anything tough in the two weeks since then until tonight. And now!

The flare was rocking, swinging in its parachute. Black shadows of the machine-gun mount at his side vibrated across Lamont.

"Think the position is okay, Martin?" Currer asked him with a quaver in his voice.

Lamont found himself seizing the opportunity.

"I'll go down—" By the time he reached that far in his sentence, he had the hatch open and his foot on the first step of the ladder. And there he stuck, impelled by monstrous forces to continue and to not stop at the charthouse, but go down to his cabin, to lie on the deck, pull blankets, mattress over him—anything to hide, hide, *hide!*

LIEUTENANT MARTIN LAMONT was hanging quivering on that first decisive strain of Gordon's graph of courage. From here he went up, or— He would go down. . . . Time's passage was suspended like the flare on a parachute of suspense.

As he stood there, half in, half out of the cockpit, glaring at the merciless ball of light in the rainy sky, memories thronged over him, shadowy but strong, long-lasting in a split second of time:

The elfin voice of his two-year-old daughter Gail—

"Hi, Daddy. What's Daddy doin'?"

"Daddy's packing, honey. You go see if you can help Mommy."

"I love you, Daddy." The feel of the strong little arms, the solid, soft-warm chunkiness of the little body, the silken-covered aliveness of the little head. It was his last leave at home, and he was packing to return to the squadron and shipment overseas on a tanker's deck. His daughter was staying here; Helen's mother had come out to look out for her a few days, as Helen was going to Norfolk with him for a last good-by. He had a room reserved at the Williamsburg Inn. Now when Gail left the room on quick running feet, Martin felt the bitter lump form in his throat, and warm melting softness in his eyes. He cried when he and Helen left little



Gail at the railroad station. When he last saw the tiny form, safe in Grandma's arms, Gail was throwing kisses to him and Mommy.

"Daddy'll be back soon," she had said, nodding her small blonde head with an invincible sureness.

And here Daddy crouched in terror under a flood of green light, on a strange black and green and shaking sea, with death overhead.

AND that last night with Helen at the Williamsburg Inn. Martin loved his wife, and she him. They wanted to express all the love of years in a last night. The room was large and comfortable, an impregnable fortress to them for their parting—impregnable except to time.

The soft, satiny warmth of legs and breasts, perfumed breath in the night, the unforgettable sweetness of the gardenia she wore in her hair. Heat and life and love, the softness of the bed, the warmth of the room, the sweet and bitter essence of love and parting.

She'd said once, almost irrelevantly: "Your legs are so straight, darling. I love your legs. Sounds funny for a girl to say that, doesn't it? Girls look at legs too, my sweet."

He'd kissed her and laughed then. Now the crippling, leg-destroying shells waited, darkly placed in the bellies of the waiting guns somewhere close to him. One shell, one hit. Those straight legs which had borne him through so much joy and so much life might be gnarled and crooked, or might be gone. That miracle in his loins that gave him powers for life and love—that might be destroyed too. It had happened last week to a man in the squadron. It was the terror-filled fear of most men in action—the fear that the power to love might be taken from them. That fear was more dreadful to them than the thought that life itself might be lost. What's life without love? Without at least the gleaming thought—"Some day I'll find her, some day I'll find that girl I've dreamed of so long."

That fear was expressed in the terrible hunger of men returned to women after action, of the premonitory hunger of men about to leave women for action.

And Martin Lamont suddenly realized why he was afraid. He was afraid because he had so very much to leave. So much to lose! And he thanked God for his fear! He knew one man in the squadron with no one to love, no hope, no happiness, nothing to leave. He was fearless.

In the moment of that realization, with the flare hovering low now over

"Gotta go below! Let me go down, let me out of this!"

head and with the blue-penciled exhausts of a searching plane dimly seen off to the right, Martin felt someone push against him from the rear, felt the man try to claw past him to the hatch door. Martin pushed the man back, looked, and in the flare's unholy light saw that it was Jake Curren, his executive officer! Jake's night in the water had come back to him too strongly, and he had reached that last fateful point on his graph of courage; he was broken, and gasping with fear.

"Gotta go below! Gotta check that chart. Let me go down, let me out of this! Can't stand the light. The light! I can't stand the sharks again! Can't stand them. Can't stand them!" His voice was nearly a cry, as he shouldered past Lamont into the darkness of the chartroom.

The radioman had been poised in balance on a point of his own, his own young but ageless fear pulling at his control. While the two officers stood fast, he could stand too; now that one of them had given way and was running below to hide his head, Luvrak could hold back no more.

"Jeez! Me too. I'm gettin' outta this. Gotta go below. I can't stay up here!" He pushed against Lamont. "Please let me past, sir. Please!" He cried then. He was only a boy—only eighteen years old.

But something had happened to Martin Lamont. An iron control had suddenly descended upon him. He was afraid, but the knowledge that he could control it and subordinate it to his will was absolute and warm in his heart.

"It's all right, kid," he said, kindly, his arm about the boy's slim shoulders. "We'll be okay. Just hang on a minute." He raised his voice into the chartroom hatch. "Oh, Jake! Bring my jacket off of the chart table when you come up, please. Little chilly up here. And check that position while you're down there too, boy."

HE laughed, and in the clear green light, his crew could see the smile on his face.

"Man, Gordon!" he said loudly to his quartermaster. "The next time I go asking for light on a dark night, kick me right square in the fanny, will you? There's too derned much power in prayer to suit me!"

Gordon laughed, pleased, relieved and lightened.

"Skipper, I'm gonna pay you next month's pay if you'll just ask for Stateside orders for me the way you did for light. Then I know I'll see Market Street again."

With the joke, feeble though it was, and the laugh, fear flowed away from the bridge, the charthouse and the turrets like water off the decks of a surfacing submarine. Jake came back

up from below, ashamed but controlled, and he brought Martin's jacket with him. Luvrak lifted his head again; his boy's dreams of glory grew strong once more.

MARTIN felt joy and triumph mingled with the fear.

And he knew now that he felt courage too. And the laughter of his little girl sounded somewhere dimly inside it.

The flare struck water and blinked out. Darkness, sweet, thick living darkness, settled over them, warm as a blanket on a cold night, a promise of life and natural God-made light after dawn.

The radio crackled and sputtered a message.

"This is Prep Charlie. Prep Charlie. Josephine in Kelly's Bar. Josephine in Kelly's Bar. Two miles north

of Aruligo. Six of them. I'm going in. Come on, Preps!"

Josephine was the enemy. Kelly's Bar was the area between Cape Espérance and Savo Island—Iron Bottomed Bay. The enemy was within a mile.

Martin took the throttles himself. He shoved them forward, and the white wake rose astern as the PT boat hurled itself through the choppy seas.

"Okay, boys! Here's where we get one. Let's go, and make 'em good!" Martin shouted, as they tore along. He was still afraid, but a kind of gaiety accompanied the fear as his boat, his men and his own body moved through the rain-swept sea to where a number of dark shapes moved down a well-worn course to the supply beaches of Cape Espérance beneath the high, jagged green mountains of Guadalcanal.

THEY CALLED IT SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION

CAN a man get on fire and burn like a candle until there is nothing left of him except a few ashes?

Modern scientists laugh at the idea, but until a century ago it was supposed to be a fairly common cause of death among fat men who had consumed in their lifetime large quantities of brandy.

If anyone reads Dickens nowadays he will remember one of the characters in "Bleak House" — Crook—who disappeared, leaving only a deposit of evil-smelling greasy soot on the walls and ceiling of his room. Readers were skeptical when the book was published and in later editions Dickens devoted a large part of the preface to records of such cases in medical literature. There are plenty, if you go back far enough.

In 1943 a Dr. Frank published in Berlin descriptions of forty-five cases. He found that: (1) Most of them took place in winter; (2) The victims were brandy-drinkers in a state of intoxication; (3) This happened where rooms were heated by fires in open fireplaces or by pans of glowing charcoal.

One of the most famous cases occurred in 1775. In Rheims the fragments of the body of a woman named Millet were found in her kitchen. There was not much left—a part of the head, the soles of the feet, the backbone. The husband was arrested and charged with murder; but the experts of that day testified that the only way the woman's body could have been so entirely con-

sumed in an open room was by spontaneous combustion. The husband was acquitted. The case was reported by Le Cat, the most distinguished French surgeon of his time.

Another famous case had a different result. "On the 13th of June, 1847, the Countess of Goerlitz was found dead in her bedroom with the upper part of her body partly consumed by fire. The head was a nearly shapeless black mass with the charred tongue protruding from it. Physicians declared that she must have taken fire spontaneously, and she was buried." Fourteen months later suspicion was aroused against one of her servants. The body was exhumed and the celebrated Drs. Liebig and Bischoff testified at the servant's trial that the countess had been dead before her body was burned. The servant was convicted of murder and executed.

In the same year there was another case in which the doctors testified unanimously that the victim, a man of 71, had died as the result of spontaneous combustion. The case was considered remarkable because the man was neither fat nor a drunkard, yet his body was almost completely consumed in a bed that was itself only slightly burned.

There have been no cases of death from spontaneous combustion for nearly a hundred years, and fat men who are heavy drinkers are no longer warned to keep away from open fires.

By MORRISON COLLADAY

A NEW YORK NEWSPAPER HAD PUT UP A PRIZE OF FIFTY THOUSAND DOLLARS FOR THE FIRST PERSON TO CROSS THE CONTINENT BY AIR—THE OFFER TO EXPIRE OCTOBER 10TH. NOBODY MADE IT WITHIN THE TIME LIMIT. BUT ONE MAN, CALBRAITH RODGERS ACHIEVED THIS FIRST TRANSCONTINENTAL FLIGHT.

ALL over America in August of 1911 people talked excitedly about just one thing: not of why the Panama Canal wasn't finished yet, nor the revolution that was brewing in China, but about the fantastic, incredible flying-machine race which was soon to begin.

The New York *American* had put up a prize of fifty thousand dollars for the first person to cross the continent by air—the offer to expire October 10th. And now it was reported that five—some stories even said ten—crazy-headed *aéronauts* had actually entered the contest.

Man had been flying only about seven years. Blériot, the Frenchman, had just managed, for the first time, to get an *aéroplane* across the English Channel—thirty-one miles. New York hadn't been flown over yet. "Too dangerous!" said the *aéronauts*. But this contest was from coast to coast—over the Western Desert, the Rockies, the Sierras! "They are attempting the impossible," declared Orville Wright. "The machine has not been made that can do it."

Nevertheless, from all over the Union excited cities, towns and states telegraphed the contestants: Kansas offered one thousand dollars for one stop there; San Francisco five thousand for the start; Los Angeles ten thousand for the finish.

By September the preparations for the contest had given it the aspect of a championship prizefight, college crew race and Kentucky Derby rolled into one. Like boxers, the *aéronauts* had backers and managers. Robert Fowler, a favorite to win, was sponsored by the Cole Motor Co., of Indianapolis, and his *aéroplane* named *The Cole Flyer*. Calbraith Rodgers, big winner at the Chicago Air Meet, was backed by Armour & Co., and his flying-machine called—after the new soft drink of his backers—the *Vin Fiz*. James Ward, a former jockey, had as his manager Ike Bloom, one-time handler of featherweight champion Abe Attell. And like boxers before a bout, the flyers were "in training!" "I'm in the best condition of my life," Ward declared in an interview. "I've been watching my diet and keeping regular hours."



A Forgotten

Another of the contestants, Earle Ovington, wealthy Boston sportsman, had even been made Special U.S. Aerial Messenger No. 1. He would carry the first letter to go *via air* cross-continent. But his Blériot cracked up on its first take-off in Queens, N. Y., and for once the mail didn't go through.

As in a crew race, the contest was to have observation trains. Each flyer planned to follow the railroad tracks cross-country. Chugging below, a special train would accompany him, carrying a sleeping car for his family, chauffeur, surgeon and mechanics; two baggage cars for a machine-shop; spare parts; and an automobile for finding him after landings; and an observation parlor car from which

spectators could watch the flight—one flyer's manager was selling observation passenger tickets coast to coast. In the Pullman kitchen the *aéronaut's* wife or mother would prepare his meals—to assure him home cooking all the way.

DERBY racehorses were never argued over more hotly than were the contestants' flying-machines. Earle Ovington would certainly win because *his* machine was a Blériot, Gnome-engined, seventy horsepower monoplane. But Rodgers' propellers were covered with linen—that made them extra strong. Some said that Ward's Curtiss biplane was the only one that had a chance: not only was it the strongest; it was also the easiest to re-



Illustrated by Clayton Knight

Air Race

assemble. "I've put it together in two hours by lantern light," boasted Ward, "and it's just been thoroughly re-braced with extra wires."

Extra wires! They were good men who flew those planes. Box-kites—an engine and propeller in them—flying on their stomachs! Frames of splintery spruce; stays of bamboo! The flyer perched on the front of the wing, engine at his right shoulder. His propellers were chain driven, like a bicycle; his landing gear consisted of ski skids out ahead, bike wheels beneath, like an oversize pram. Triangular canvas fins ran out in front—to keep the plane from skidding in the turns! And you *swung* the plane around with the balancing ropes that went over your shoulders. Balancing,

like a high-wire walker! And no parachutes, of course. How many of today's test pilots would like to take up one of those planes?

But here they were—preparing to fly the North American continent. In the end only three contestants got very far.

ROBERT FOWLER took off first, before a crowd of ten thousand in Golden Gate Park, San Francisco. On September 11, at 1:30, he lifted his biplane from the greensward and headed for the Sierras. He planned to fly the pass where the Southern Pacific comes through at Colfax. It was seven thousand feet there, with peaks rising to fifteen thousand on either side. But Fowler was confident:

by
**C. LESTER
WALKER**

"I have a rubber rain cover for the magneto," he said, "and a rubber hood to protect my legs from the rushing air. I have a thermos bottle of hot lemonade, and another of hot chocolate. And my sun goggles have individual eyeshades. I plan to drive my biplane cross-continent at an average height of eight hundred feet, making, at least once, four hundred miles in a day; and to reach New York, easy, before the October 10 expiration date."

THAT night at 6:15, Fowler got down from the *Cole Flyer* and took the cotton out of his ears in Auburn, 129 miles away. Next day, flying four hundred feet above the Southern Pacific tracks, Fowler reached Alta uneventfully, elevation 5500, and was then attacked by sharp side winds. The biplane canted, started to slip into a spin. Frantically Fowler warped the levels to prevent his turning over sidewise. But the plane, guy wires screaming, plunged. It ripped into some sugar pines, somersaulted, and skidded down the trunks, snapping off branches. Gripping the stays, Fowler held his seat. As the machine struck ground, he was thrown clear. The search party from his special train found him matter-of-factly assaying the wreckage.

"Propellers gone, two planes smashed," he announced. "But we'll rebuild it, and in a few days I'll go on."

With his re-made Wright, Fowler again attacked the Sierras. In the pass, on the 23rd, the plane droned up to 6500 feet. Because of a high wind it could climb only twenty feet a minute in that thin air. That was not fast enough to clear the rocky walls, so it had to descend. Next day in still air it did eight thousand feet. Only five hundred feet more was needed to clear Summit Station and the crest. Suddenly the radiator boiled, its engine overheated and stuck. Fowler had to land. At Emigrant Gap that night he predicted to reporters from the Special:

"Tomorrow I'll do it. Third time, you know, never fails."

But on his third try Fowler was to run into more trouble. He hurled the *Cole Flyer* at the mountains. Within twenty minutes fierce winds had beat it back to earth. He announced that he would ship the plane

to Los Angeles and make a fresh start from there. Ten minutes outside Los Angeles on the fourth attempt, he crashed again, took off unhurt and reached Pasadena. East of El Paso, Fowler wrecked his plane completely and quit for good.

ON September 13th, two days after Fowler had first lifted his plane out of San Francisco, Jimmy Ward got his start. Wearing a football helmet, and, as the papers said, "with a clatter of detonations from the monster fifty-horsepower engine," he rose from Governor's Island in New York harbor and headed toward New Jersey and California. He promptly got lost. Out of Jersey City he was puzzled: which were the Erie tracks going to Buffalo? And where was his special train? After fifteen minutes of frantic flying, he spiraled down to an open field to find out where he was.

It was Ashbrook—not on the Erie at all, but on the Lehigh Valley. Up

once more, he was soon lost again. He descended to find out if he was over Paterson. It was East Orange. Going on, he followed the proper railroad, but the tracks forked. Sunset found him landing in Lambert Lane in Paterson. On the first day *en route* to California he had flown two hundred miles, but ended up just twenty-two from his starting place.

Despite this unimpressive beginning, the flight had stirred up hysterical public interest. When Ward flew to Callicoon, N. Y., (120 miles), the next day, the hilltops were black with people. School children were marshaled in groups along the roads, faces upturned. "When he landed at Callicoon, he was mobbed by kissing girls, to the young aeronaut's great embarrassment," reported the local paper.

In the next three days Ward made only fifty-four miles—to Corning, N. Y. He was having the devil of a time. At five thousand feet his en-

gine had almost wrenched loose. On circling a meadow, he found his oil cup, that is, his lubrication, gone. Off again two days later, he had had to land at Addison, N. Y., when hot water from the engine spurted over his neck. As he took off once more, his front wheel hit a tree and collapsed. When he tried to land, two rear tires blew out. His Special's mechanics arrived and fixed him up. On the take-off a stone kicked up and hit a propeller blade. A carpenter planed off the nicks, and at four o'clock Ward was taxiing for another "rising" when cows in the adjoining pasture stampeded, broke through the fences and drove the gathered spectators straight into the path of the plane. Ward tried to check, slewed into a fence, and crumpled his lower wing.

The final blow came when, just outside of Addison, his engine died at four thousand feet. Volplaning down, he snagged the branch of a tree. The plane did a flip; its outriggers and main chassis were smashed, and its seat driven a foot into the ground. Shaken, but miraculously unhurt, Ward was able to walk away.

"The 13th-of-the-month start put a perpetual hoodoo on me," he announced. "I'm only three hundred miles from New York. But I'm quitting this race—right now."

MEANWHILE in New York on September 16th Calbraith Rodgers with his Wright E-X biplane, the *Vin Fiz*, had announced he would enter the race the next day, three days behind Ward. Rodgers, thirty-two years old, was a rare kind of aviator, not flashy and dynamic, but quiet and deliberate. Scarlet fever had left him with a speech difficulty and rather deaf. Rumor said his sense of balance had also been injured. But Rodgers had fledged (soloed) more quickly than any other pupil at the Wright School in Dayton—after only ninety minutes of instruction on his first day. A chronic cigar smoker, he judged a good landing by whether or not it shook the ashes off.

Rodgers tried to get off at two o'clock on the 17th, but couldn't because of the two thousand paid admissions which swarmed over the Sheepshead Bay race track and his aeroplane. He pleaded. The police pleaded. The mechanics ran the *Vin Fiz* up and down. The crowd pursued it. Finally after two hours Rodgers, in cap, stiff collar, conventional business suit, got in his seat and started the engine. The crowd fled. He skipped the *Vin Fiz* along the grass, lifted it, and at eight hundred feet went clattering over Brooklyn. The first aeronaut to fly over Manhattan, he headed up Broadway



Rodgers had to build his entire plane four times.

at 1700 feet, then turned west at Madison Square to New Jersey and the Erie tracks.

Foresighted, Rodgers had his Special's hangar cars painted white, and had strips of canvas pegged down between the rails at every Erie crossing for ten miles north. After that he followed the crowds. Sunday picnickers were everywhere along the roadbed, to watch him pass.

HE made Middletown that night after flying 105 miles—"in 104 minutes," he boasted to the thousands of folk who had come in buggies, surreys, farm wagons and brass-trimmed motor cars to see him. "Which means I should easily average two hundred miles a day cross-continent."

It was an ill-fated prediction. Next day on the take-off the wheels of the *Vin Fiz* clipped a willow tree, the plane plunged head-first into a chicken coop, cutting Rodgers' head. He was pulled out dazed and bleeding but still smoking his cigar. "We'll work all night on repairs," he said, "and I'll wire Jimmy Ward I'll catch him tomorrow."

When Rodgers came down ninety-five miles west of Middletown on the 21st, souvenir hunters began taking his plane apart. One was caught trying to cold-chisel a valve off the engine. A woman, apprehended unscrewing a nut, innocently protested: "But there are so many. I'm sure one won't make any difference." Parts of the *Vin Fiz* missing, Rodgers reached Elmira, to find he had flown 215 miles, but off course, and was only 110 nearer California.

Three days later Rodgers reached Salamanca, 350 miles from New York, stood ruefully gazing at a crippled *Vin Fiz*. He had struck a fence in taking off and broken his two propellers, left wing and a landing wheel. "Not much left," he commented bitterly, "of my original machine."

He didn't know that from then on he was in for a streak of phenomenal luck. A series of good days with few accidents took him clear over Ohio. By October 5th he was struggling with the problem of Indiana's aviation-mad populace. "Everywhere people want to keep me for days," he wrote a friend, "and wherever I fly, everything stops, everything else is forgotten."

When he came into Huntington, three men on a handcar on the railroad tracks "forgot everything else," staring at the *Vin Fiz*, as if bewitched, until Rodgers had to swoop low, point and yell a warning of the Special coming around the bend.

In Indiana even the dead had to wait for him. Gliding into Hammond, he passed a funeral cortège on the highway. The pallbearers set



It was a good landing . . . if his cigar ashes did not shake off.

down the coffin, solemnly took off their hats, and stood waving until he had passed from sight.

October 8 saw him west of Chicago, at Delwood Park, Ill., and renouncing all hope of the fifty-thousand-dollar prize, with its deadline only two days away. "But I intend to go on," he asserted. "I intend to get to the Pacific—even if it takes me a year."

The *Vin Fiz* had already passed its halfway mark, and at Vinita, Okla., it logged 1682 miles. That day it made its longest non-stop flight up to that point: 220 miles. Confident, Rodgers told a crowd of farmer well-comers: "I need only eight more days just like this one."

But some of the worst days lay ahead. The flight settled down to a contest between what seemed the biplane's demon-possessed determina-

tion to break down completely, and Rodgers' glacierlike stubbornness to go on. At Muskogee, Okla., on landing he found his engine dead and full of water. Even the birds seemed determined to end his flight. North of Waco a gigantic eagle chased him for twenty miles. Screaming, it dived at the E-X again and again, badly damaging his rudder wires.

Over Sanderson, Tex., at 3500 feet, a piston crystallized. At Fort Hancock a pump connection sheared off. Rollers of his propeller chain snapped as he dropped into El Paso.

People following the flight now began to wonder how long Rodgers' nerve would last. Would the almost daily narrow escapes eventually break him? There were signs that the strain was telling; he had lost fifteen pounds in weight since leaving New York.

Then on November 3rd came his closest call. He had left Tucson, Ariz., was pushing on to California. At four thousand feet, the *Vin Fiz* came in sight of the dried-up bed of the ancient Salton Sea. Then came the explosion. A cylinder blew out, filling Rodgers' arm with splinters of steel—the arm which operated the leveling lever. The biplane now lunged like a stricken steed. His arm throbbing with pain, Rodgers managed to right the machine and balance it down six miles to a deadstick landing at Imperial Junction on the Santa Fe.

While his surgeon extracted the splinters from his arm, Rodgers told his mechanics to put new cylinders in the engine; they were to work all night if necessary. Pasadena, his announced goal, was now only 178 miles away. He wanted to make it next day.

In the morning the crew hacked a four-mile path through sage and mesquite so Rodgers' Palmer-Singer racing car from the Special could tow the plane to a take-off. From a beach on the old Salton Sea he rose, after five tries and five engine failures, and headed west toward the San Geronio pass, an opening between sheer six-thousand-foot walls, where the roaring winds from the Pacific funneled through.

Right in the pass trouble came. The travel-tired *Vin Fiz* sprung a radiator leak. Then the magneto began to work loose. Rodgers held it with one hand; with his other and his knees he flew on six miles to Banning, and volplaned down to a plowed field.

In Pasadena the people were waiting for him. They jammed Tournament Park all day; and the Mt. Wilson big telescope was trained on the horizon. On November 5th at four o'clock, just two days after the explosion over the Salton Sea, the telescope spotted a speck in the eastern sky.

"He came rushing toward us like a gigantic roc of the Arabian Nights," hymned a newspaper. "Then he was over us, performing fantastic and perilous evolutions. The crowd gasped—when he shifted his plane and spiraled down to the white sheet marking the landing."

PASADENA went crazy. Rodgers, wearing his unheroic brown cap and business suit, was wrapped in an American flag and hoisted into a motor car. Press-service telephones were shoved into his hands. Chrysanthemums fell in a blizzard about him. "Speech!" Everybody was yelling. The car circled the field. People ran beside it, jumping on and off the running-board with delighted squeals of "I touched him!" Then it pushed

its way to Pasadena's Hotel Maryland. Here the hero signed the register:

"C. P. Rodgers—New York to Pasadena by Air."

When the welcoming committee asked him if there was anything he wanted, anything at all Pasadena could do for him now, Rodgers thought a second.

"Yes," he said finally, "I'm hungry. Could I, perhaps, have a bowl of crackers and cream?"

In 1903 the first automobile (a Winton) had crossed the continent in sixty-five days. Rodgers in his *Vin Fiz* had done it in forty-nine. He had made thirty stop-overs and had had to land sixty-nine times, but his actual travel time in the air had been three days and ten hours—better than many express trains today. Though the *Vin Fiz* had never stayed in the air much longer than two hours at a time he had averaged fifty-one miles an hour and flown (including off-course) a total of 4231.

Even more astonishing was the record of repairs. This, as nothing else, gave the measure of the flyer's fortitude. He had had to rebuild his entire plane four times. Among other parts, he had used up eleven skids, eight propellers, six wings, two radiators, two steering rods, two tails, six cylinders, four propeller chains, four back tail skids, and four fins. In fact, the only original parts with which the *Vin Fiz* had started and finished were its vertical rudder and its drip pan.

Financially the adventure brought Rodgers little profit. His sponsors had paid him about twenty thousand dollars. For stopping and stunting in some towns he had picked up four thousand more. But his biplane had cost him five thousand, and he had put out seventeen thousand for its repairs. Did he regret much missing the big prize? "No," he answered, "the money wasn't the thing. What matters is: I did it, didn't I?"

He had made the United States air-conscious from coast to coast for the first time. "Some day," he prophesied, "we'll do one hundred miles an hour—if a way can be devised to box in the passengers against the wind. I expect to see the day when we shall fly from New York to the Pacific in three days."

He was not to see that day. At Long Beach, in April, in a borrowed plane, something went wrong, and Rodgers dived two hundred feet into the surf. This time his luck failed. Plane and engine fell upon him, crushing out his life. Ironically, the spot was a few yards from where, some months before, he had for the first time dipped the wheels of the *Vin Fiz* in the Pacific at the final end of his pioneer flight.

—THE END

Arms and

IX

Bridget Divers— Union Cavalrywoman

by FAIRFAX
DOWNEY

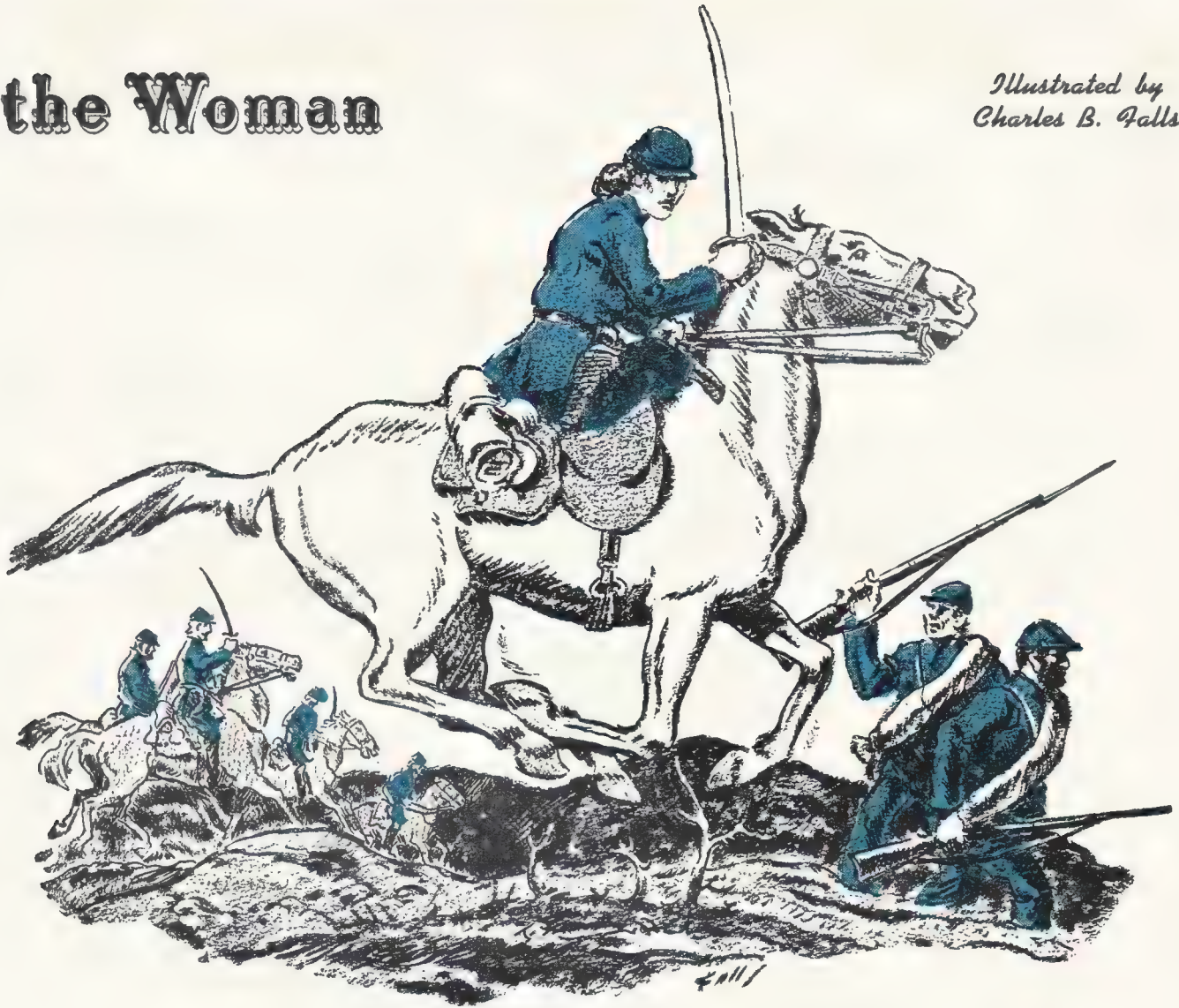
MICHIGAN BRIDGET," as all Sheridan's horsemen came to call her, had a husband whom she followed when he rode off to the Civil War in the First Michigan Cavalry. But that husband soon found that he could count on no more than one man's quota of her care and attention. Irish Biddy took the whole brigade under her maternal wing.

Officially not present or accounted for, Bridget quickly made herself indispensable in camp, on the march and in action. She served as nurse, surgeon and confidante. Letters of inquiry from home always were referred to her for answer. She knew more about the Michigan troopers than their commanding officers and adjutants, and kept it all filed away in a remarkable memory. Helping the chaplain, she collected books and newspapers for the men. When a purse of three hundred dollars was subscribed for her by grateful comrades, she promptly spent most of it on the comfort of her Michiganders. In a later war it would take a field dressing station, a half-dozen Red Cross canteen girls, and a U.S.O. troupe to fill Bridget's shoes, not to mention a slew of special service, public relations, and morale officers.

When the bugles blew Boots and Saddles, Bridget never lacked the means to obey, for the staff saw to it that she was well mounted. A hell-for-leather cavalrywoman, the husky, plain-faced Biddy expended eight or ten horses, several being shot under her, in four years of hard campaigning. In action she turned fighting Irish, and if a trooper fell, she never hesitated to take his place in the fir-

the Woman

*Illustrated by
Charles B. Falls*



"Arragh, go in, b'ys! Bate the bloody spalpeens—and God be wid yez!"

ing line. At Fair Oaks, when the Confederates drove Casey's Division back in confusion on the ranks of Seventh Massachusetts, it was Bridget who saved the day. She was in support with the Michigan cavalry and at the moment she was busy tending her husband, wounded in the leg. But he would have to wait. She sprang up, waved her forage cap and drowned out the colonel's commands with a wild Irish yell:

"Arragh, go in, b'ys! Bate the bloody spalpeens and revinge me husband—and God be wid yez!"

The regiment cheered and launched a headlong charge that broke the enemy's center.

ON two other occasions she rallied troops and halted routs. At Cedar Creek she was surrounded by the enemy but burst out at a gallop and escaped. During one of Sheridan's

raids she rode for four nights without sleep, then took part in a cavalry engagement in which her colonel was wounded and her captain killed. After she had patched up the former and put him on a hospital train, she returned through the enemy's lines to the battlefield for the captain's body, which she was resolved "nivver should be lift on Rebel soil." She carried the corpse back on a horse and arranged for embalming and shipment to Michigan. Hurrying toward the front again, she joined a wagon train loaded with Union wounded, and was escorting it to the rear when Confederate cavalry galloped up. Drivers dropped reins, jumped from their seats and ran, and the Gray riders commenced unhitching the teams. First Bridget pleaded with them, then gave them the flat of her tongue and the back of her hand, but the Southerners needed horses too badly to heed

the angry Irishwoman. She had to round up new teams, and only after she assured the transportation of the wounded men did she turn in and catch up on her sleep.

THE end of the war and the mustering out of the Michiganders left Bridget in despair. She could not bear to leave the Army she loved and yet she must, since women troopers would not be tolerated in the ranks in time of peace.

Suddenly her problem was solved. To fight the Indian tribes in the West, troops still were needed, and tables of organization provided for four laundresses to a company, usually the wives of noncommissioned officers. Hands that held reins and a carbine could scrub soldiers' shirts. Quartered on Soapsuds Row in a Western post, Bridget Divers happily spent the rest of her life in the Army.

The Last Day of

THE diary lay exposed on the writing desk. There was no reason to lock it up, for the girl who kept it had never romanticized in it. It was just a factual log of the books she read, the plays and parties she attended, her assignments at art school, and anything particularly bright or interesting that happened at the San Diego Trust Company, where she was employed as a secretary.

Just now, at ten in the evening, she was arriving home from a picture show. She took a latchkey from her purse and unlocked apartment number 101. She turned then with a smile. "Good night, Mr. Kalland. And thank you."

Her escort looked disappointed. He'd hoped she'd invite him in. This was the fifth time he'd asked Nancy Waring for a date, and the other four

times she'd turned him down. Tonight, when she'd consented to dinner and a show, he'd thought she might be beginning to like him.

"Good night, Miss Waring." He left her reluctantly and crossed the foyer to apartment 100—which, since he owned this thirty-unit building, he occupied as resident-manager.

Nancy entered her own apartment, 101. It was small, compact, tastefully decorated. A framed seascape above the desk was her own work—on weekends she liked to sketch along the beaches. She was young and uncommonly pretty, with nice ash-blond hair and cornflower eyes, and it wasn't any wonder that Mr. Kalland wanted to take her out.

She dropped her evening coat, then sat down at a writing-desk to make an entry. Her diary was a leather-bound book with printed date headings, a page for each day of the year, such as may be bought in bookstores.

This being May 4th, she turned to the page headed with that date. The entry she made was:

Finished "With How Sad Steps, O Moon," and returned it to Mr. Foley. He liked those La Jolla sketches I made. Bill Adler got a raise today, and everybody at the office gave a cheer. On the way home stopped at the hospital to see his wife; her baby is beautiful. Dinner at a beach club and then to see "The Black Curtain." A thriller, but a shade too gruesome.

That was all. Mr. Kalland, her landlord across the hall, hadn't impressed her enough even to be mentioned as an escort.

Nancy put her pen back in its well. All the pages beyond May 4th were

blank, she supposed, except for the printed date headings. But as she idly riffled through them, she exposed an exception: A page—in August *wasn't* blank. It contained a startling entry, in ink, in writing not her own.

The date of the page was August 30th, nearly four months in the future. The entry read:

This is the last day of my life! Good-by.

Was it a threat, or just a crude practical joke? It had to be one or the other. The frightening thing was that someone had been in her apartment. He had invaded not only the privacy of her home, but the privacy of her diary. The writing was masculine. She was sure of that. In effect, it predicted her death on August 30th of this year. It was preposterously uncanny, and could hardly be shrugged off as a prank.

Nancy picked up her telephone and called the police.

THE plain-clothes man who arrived twenty minutes later had a slight, wiry build and a dead-pan Ned Sparks face. He spoke with a nasal twang. "Slater's the name. What seems to be the trouble, miss?"

"Look! Someone's been in here. He's been writing in my diary!" Her voice had fury in it, but her eyes held fright. "I want you to find out who did it."

Slater looked at the entry. "A gag, huh?" He smiled furtively.

"But someone's been in here, I tell you! The apartment was locked. He had no right to—"

"A prow, huh?" Slater cut in. He glanced around the room. "Anything missing?"

She admitted nothing was missing. The detective read the entry again.

"Anybody got it in for you, miss? What about August 30th? Is it the anniversary of anything in your life?"

"No. August 30th means nothing to me. I have no enemies. I'm not suing anyone. Nobody's suing me."

"It's a man's writing." Slater thumbed to the first four months of entries and saw that the writing was distinctly feminine. "So it's a cinch you didn't walk in your sleep and write it yourself. Who else besides you has a key to this apartment?"

"Olaf, the janitor, I suppose. He lives in the basement. And the owner

The entry read: "This is the last day of my life! Good-by."



My Life

of the building, Mr. Kalland, who lives across the hall."

"Got a rent receipt signed by Kalland?"

Nancy produced several of them, and Slater compared them with the August 30th entry. "It's not the same," he announced. "So we can cross off Kalland. Know what I think, miss?"

"No. What do you think?"

"You're young, and you got looks. So you've had plenty of men callers here. Right?"

"Naturally. But what could that have to do with it?"

"Say a guy calls to take you out. He sits down while you go powder your nose. He sees a diary on your desk. So he picks it up and writes a gag line on the first blank page he opens. Could have happened two-three weeks ago and you didn't notice it till tonight."

She stared. "But why would he do a silly thing like that?"

Slater shrugged. "People do screwy things—like climbing flagpoles; like going out on scavenger hunts; like college initiations where they tell a guy to go out to some girl's house and steal her garter. Know any college lads, miss?"

"Yes," Nancy said coldly. "But they're all reasonably sane."

"All right. Then if it ain't a gag, it's a threat. You want to find out who did it, don't you?"

"I insist on knowing. But I don't want my friends insulted with questions."

"We won't need to ask 'em anything. It's easy to get handwriting samples. People make applications at public offices. They pay taxes. They write checks. Just give me the names of all the guys you've let in here since the first of January. You bought the book about that time, I suppose?"

"I bought it at a bookstore the day before New Year's. It's been right on this desk ever since."

"Handwriting can be disguised," Slater said, "but not enough to fool an expert. Our expert can make the comparisons without the suspects knowing anything about it."

Reluctantly Nancy gave him seven names. Slater made a note of them. "All right if I take this diary along?"

She skimmed through the January to May entries to make sure they con-

Every story, it is said, is based on one of only a couple of dozen original plots. . . . The murder mystery which follows, however, seems to have elements of real novelty.



by ALLAN VAUGHAN ELSTON

tained nothing embarrassing. Fortunately she hadn't let her hair down in a single line. And Slater promised her it wouldn't be seen except by the Police Department's handwriting expert.

He took the book and started out, then turned to ask two questions.

"Ever on a jury that made a verdict on August 30th?"

"I was never on a jury at all."

"Ever testify at a criminal trial?"

"No."

Then he was gone.

And she knew by his last questions that he wasn't entirely sold on the prank theory. He was conceding at least a faint chance that it might be sinister. A revenge or spite motive! Nancy felt a shiver at her spine. Could someone really intend August 30th to be the last day of her life?

DETECTIVE SLATER reported two days later. It was late afternoon, and Nancy had just returned home from the office.

He handed her the diary. "We made a photostatic copy of that August 30th entry," he said, "in case we need it again. So far, no dice. None of your boy friends wrote it. Neither did the manager or janitor here. And nobody knows we checked on 'em except Olaf the janitor."

"Why did you tell Olaf? He's a perfectly harmless old man."

"I told Olaf about it," Slater explained, "so he can be on the lookout for screwball prowlers. There's thirty tenants in this building. Might be any one of 'em. Can't watch 'em all myself, so I told Olaf to keep his eyes open."

"And nobody else knows anything about it?"

"No one but you and me and a handwriting expert. Chances are it's just a gag." Slater gave one of his frozen smiles. "If it happens again, give me a ring."

If it happened again! Nancy had a feeling of exasperation as he left her. Her mind winced to and fro between a prank and a threat theory. The one filled her with a seething, impotent fury; the other with a constantly recurring terror.

The next day was Saturday. Nancy worked only a five-day week at the trust company. So this morning she took her easel, stool and paint box to the beach. It was only a short walk. The season being too early for bathers, she found the beach deserted.

Far out in the bay a steel-gray cruiser rode at anchor. Gulls were swooping, and the California sunshine had never been brighter. Nancy set up her easel beside an overturned skiff which lay just clear of the water. She would do a scape of the bay.

Then a man's voice accosted her. She turned and saw a gaunt grim face, deep-set eyes and a shock of auburn hair that needed trimming. She thought at first he might be fifty years old. A second glance told her he was much younger, perhaps not over thirty. He looked rugged and trouble-scarred, and his eyes held hints of bitterness and rebellion.

"Are you Nancy Waring?"

She nodded. Could he be one of the students at the art school?

"My name is Rand," he said, "David Rand. I owe you an apology."

"I don't remember having met you, Mr. Rand."

"You haven't," he said grimly, "till now. Until an hour ago I didn't know you existed."

"And what happened an hour ago?"

"I wash cars at the Crown Service Station just a block from your apartment. A janitor named Olaf Swanson came in for a gallon of cleaning fluid. I heard him tell the tire man about some crank-prowler who sneaked into a girl's apartment and wrote in her diary. I drew Olaf aside and asked him what girl, and what apartment."

She flushed. "How could that concern you?"

"It was I," he said bluntly, "who wrote the August 30th entry in your diary."

She sat very still before the easel, staring at him. "When," she asked in a moment, "did you do it?"

"At three o'clock on a Saturday afternoon, exactly two weeks ago."

Two weeks ago, Nancy remembered, she'd spent the week-end with a classmate in Pomona. "But why," she demanded, "would you break into my apartment and write in my diary?"

"I didn't."

"But you just said you did."

"No," he corrected, "I said I wrote in your diary. The diary, the only time I ever saw it, was in apartment 100, across the hall."

"But that," she protested, "is impossible. A man named Kalland lives in 100. How could my private diary be in his apartment?"

"I don't know," David Rand said. "But it was there."

His voice had truth in it. And something else. It belied his ill-fitting suit and untrimmed hair. It was forthright and precise, and came almost with a Harvard accent.

Suddenly her wits sharpened, and she realized why Horace Kalland, slyly and surreptitiously, might have borrowed her diary. He'd been trying to date her. Four times he'd asked her to go out with him, and she'd declined. How, he might ask himself, do I stand with her? What are my chances? Is she just being coy? She keeps a diary. What does it say about me? Does she think I'm interesting, or a nuisance and a bore? She's away to Pomona for two days. I have a passkey. Why don't I borrow the diary and look through it? When she gets home, it'll be back on her desk, and she'll never know.

Resentment brought flames to Nancy's cheeks. If Kalland had done that, he was the most contemptible snooper she'd ever heard of.

"Seeing it on a man's desk," Rand explained, "in his bachelor quarters, I naturally thought it was his personal diary. I was there to confirm a suspicion about his past life. Mainly I wanted to size him up. I asked if he had a vacancy. He said yes, number 303, and he'd be glad to show it to me. By then I'd spotted the diary.

I said I'd like to see 303. He went into the next room to get the key. During the minute he was gone, I opened the book to a page headed August 30th and wrote nine words. I closed the book and faced him as he came in. He showed me 303. I said it didn't quite suit me, and left."

And Kalland, Nancy reasoned, would himself have no cause to open the book again. He'd already spied through it. He'd simply return the diary to her desk in apartment 101.

"But why," she persisted, "did you do it?"

"To solve a murder—one I myself was found guilty of." David Rand met her eyes, and his own did not waver. "I served a seven-year term for it, and have only recently been released."

It should have shocked her. Instead, a tightness came to Nancy's throat, and she couldn't explain it. Although everything he said seemed fantastic, she found herself believing every word. He looked so square-jawed and genuine—so completely different from Horace Kalland . . . Kalland, with his neat black mustache, his waxen smile and his horn-rimmed glasses; Kalland, with his immaculately parted hair which always made her wonder if it was a toupee.

"And you think he did it? This murder they blamed on you?"

"It *could* be Kalland. I don't know. He's the only lead I have."

"Please tell me about it," she urged breathlessly.

He sat down on the upturned boat and brought out a cheap sack of makings. How strange for a man who talked like Harvard to be rolling his own! But with a prison record, washing cars might be the best job he could get. If he'd actually committed that murder, Nancy thought, he wouldn't so persistently pursue its solution.

"Do you really want to know about it," he asked her, "—from the beginning?"

"I really do," Nancy said warmly. Her canvas stood untouched. She'd forgotten she'd come here to paint a sea scene. A far more dramatic scene confronted her, posed in prison gray on the face of David Rand.

"It began," he told her, "in the offices of Irving Metcalf, a broker in Boston. I was on Metcalf's staff. One morning we came to work and found forty thousand dollars missing from the safe. The safe hadn't been cracked. It was an inside job."

"Was Horace Kalland one of you?" Nancy asked.

"No. He doesn't come into it yet. I was one of seven employees who knew the safe's combination. We were all questioned by the police and by an insurance detective. They got

nowhere. But after a week, Irving Metcalf called me in on the carpet and fired me."

"You mean he accused you of stealing the money?"

"No. He just said he wouldn't need me any longer. That's what made me mad. I was the only one fired, so I'd be leaving under a cloud. I'd have a fat chance of getting a job anywhere else. Naturally, I sounded off. I told everybody I'd make Metcalf say why he fired me even if I had to choke it out of him. Late that night I went to his house. He was alone there. He said the incident was closed and he didn't care to discuss it. I lost my head and told him what I thought of him. Neighbors on both sides heard me shouting at him. They saw me leave about midnight. In the morning Metcalf was found dead in his living-room. Somebody had taken a punch at him and knocked him against an andiron. I was picked up for it."

"And you hadn't touched him?"

"I hadn't touched him. But I had a motive. I'd made threats. I was established at the scene of the crime. They gave me ten years. I was released at the end of seven. I went straight back to Boston with one purpose: to clear my name. The only way was to find out who really killed Metcalf."

"But how *could* you? After seven years!"

DAVID RAND dropped his cigarette and stamped it out in the sand. "It looked hopeless. The case was closed and forgotten. So I went to old files and reread the evidence. It didn't tell me anything new. I kept on reading old newspapers till I came to a date six months after the crime. There I found an item about a suicide. A man named Clifton Halleck had gone to a public beach, rented a bathing-suit, undressed in a beach cabin, left a suicide note on his clothes and swam out to sea. He was never seen again. The date was August 30th. The suicide note said: '*This is the last day of my life. Good-by.*'"

"Just like the writing in my diary!" Nancy exclaimed.

Rand nodded. "Police accepted it as suicide because of reasonable motives. Halleck had no money or insurance. He'd lost his job and was about to be evicted from his house for inability to pay rent. His wife, an honest woman, was sincerely convinced it was suicide. She said he'd been morbid, and had threatened it more than once. None of his effects was missing. It couldn't be a faked disappearance to collect insurance, because no policy existed."

"But how," Nancy wondered, "could it affect your case?"

"It was I," he said bluntly, "who wrote in your diary."

*Illustrated by
Raymond Thayer*



"Halleck, I learned, had lived in a cottage across the alley from Metcalf. With that thin thread to go on, I figured out a possible solution. Suppose Metcalf robbed his own safe. He wouldn't dare hide the money in his house, but he might bury it in his backyard. An indemnity company would make good his loss. So he'd be turning forty thousand into eighty."

"And Halleck?"

"From across the alley Halleck could have seen Metcalf bury a package in his backyard on the night of the theft. Let's say that a week later he heard a loud quarreling voice in Metcalf's house. He came closer and heard me protesting I hadn't stolen any money. I left. Then say Halleck came in by the back door. Maybe he demanded a cut. Or maybe he just asked Metcalf what he'd buried in the backyard. In either case Metcalf would jump him. A fight might follow, in which Metcalf was knocked against an andiron."

"And Halleck," Nancy ventured, "dug up the money."

"Not right away, probably. He'd be afraid to touch it, with police actively searching for it. I think he just went home and kept quiet for a few months. And he faced an obstacle even then. The obstacle was his honest wife. She knew he was broke. If he produced money, or even paid a few debts, he'd have to explain. The only safe way he could get away with the money was to disappear. So he faked a suicide."

"And by waiting six months," Nancy suggested, "the two events wouldn't seem to be connected."

"That was my theory. But when I took it to the police, they weren't impressed. They lacked knowledge of a key fact which I knew myself: the fact of my own innocence."

A boy and a girl strolled by, looking for shells along the beach. After they passed, Nancy prompted: "So you started out to look for Halleck, after seven years! But where could you begin?"

"I talked to people who'd known Halleck. Did he have a hobby? Yes, he liked to play billiards. And he liked beach bathing. That was all I could get. Then I asked the Boston police if they had a list of things found in Halleck's abandoned clothing. The list was on file. Just what any man might carry in his pockets. Keys, a few coins, a knife, a wallet and a library card. A number, 7763, had been scribbled in pencil on the library card. I asked the Boston public library if it was the number of a book. They said no, all book numbers had letter prefixes."

"So what did you do then?"

"Finally I gave up. I decided to go just as far away from Boston as I could get. The farthest corner of the country was Los Angeles. I went to the depot and asked the price, with

tax, of a one-way chair-car ticket. The agent said it was \$91.33 to any Pacific Coast destination. A hunch hit me. I asked what the same ticket would have cost me seven years ago. The man looked it up in an old rate-book. '\$77.63,' he said. And there I had my number."

"Of course!" Nancy agreed quickly. "The number on the card."

"Halleck's instinctive move would be the same as mine—to get as far from Boston as possible. Not abroad, because he wouldn't dare apply for a passport. The farthest he could go was the Pacific Coast. Planning it weeks in advance, he found out about the fare. The same fare would take him to Seattle, San Francisco or Los Angeles. But since he liked beach bathing, the sunnier the climate, the better. And he'd need a big city to lose himself in—one like Los Angeles, with a huge and constant influx of strangers where he wouldn't be noticed. So I went to Los Angeles myself, with a feeling I was just seven years behind Halleck."

"What did you do there?"

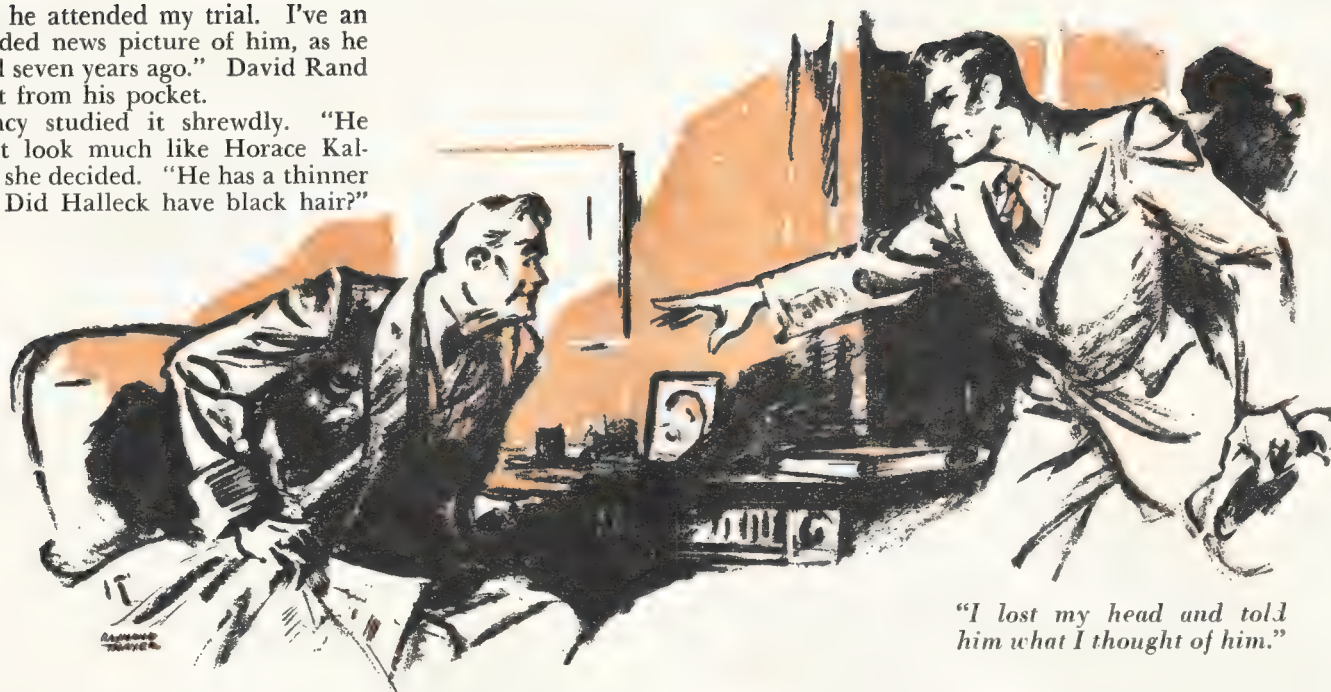
"I got a job clerking. But when they found out I'd served time, they let me go." The bitterness came back to Rand's face. "I knew nothing would help unless I found Halleck."

"Would you know him?"

"Probably not. I never saw him in my life. He probably never saw me,

unless he attended my trial. I've an old faded news picture of him, as he looked seven years ago." David Rand took it from his pocket.

Nancy studied it shrewdly. "He doesn't look much like Horace Kalland," she decided. "He has a thinner face. Did Halleck have black hair?"



"I lost my head and told him what I thought of him."

"No—brown. But hair can be dyed. A mustache, horn-rimmed glasses, plus seven years of well-fed living, would make a difference."

"You were in Los Angeles. What brought you to San Diego?"

"I haunted billiard-parlors, looking over the regulars. It got me nowhere. Then I ran onto an ex-swindler I'd known in the Massachusetts pen—Fritz Harper. Going straight now, he said. But Fritz knows all the con rackets, backward and forward. I told him my problem, and he said maybe he could help me."

"And did he?"

"It didn't seem possible that he could. But in a few days Fritz looked me up. He said that on a date about two weeks after Halleck's disappearance, a man named Horace K. Kalland had showed up in San Diego with forty thousand in ready cash."

It was too amazing for Nancy to comprehend. Rand explained it with a grim smile. "Confidence men have fertile sources of information. One source is a thing called a sucker list. Southern California, Fritz says, is full of sucker lists. He gave me an example. Suppose an Iowa farmer sells out for fifty thousand and comes to L.A. He wants to invest it there—maybe in a citrus grove, maybe in desert acreage, maybe in an apartment house. After he's made a few inquiries, every real-estate shark on the West Coast has him spotted. Fritz simply dug up a seven-year-old list of such prospects. Each item on it was a name, a date and place of arrival, and a sum of money."

"So you came to San Diego."

"And looked in the telephone book. Found that Horace K. Kalland owns

and manages the Kalland Apartments. Went to the courthouse and looked up the record. He bought that apartment, paying forty thousand down, at just about the time Halleck could have arrived here."

"Is that your entire case against Kalland?"

"Not quite. I followed him around. He went to a beach club and played billiards. I didn't see him go for a swim, but he'd hardly pay dues at a beach club unless he often did. The main thing is, he strikes me as a phony: Waxy face, thick glasses, hair that looks like a toupee. I lived with phonies for seven years. You get so you know them on sight. They live behind masks; their eyes hide secrets. That was my impression of Kalland."

"So two weeks ago you went to see him."

Rand nodded. "That was when I baited him by writing a line in what I thought was his diary."

Nancy flushed. "So now we have something else on him. Halleck was sly enough to fake a suicide. Kalland is slow enough to browse through my diary."

"I took a room across the street from Kalland," Rand said, "—to watch his reaction. When he read the August 30th entry in his diary, if he were Halleck it would panic him. He'd pack up and run. But he didn't."

"He didn't," Nancy surmised, "because he didn't open the book again. Even now he doesn't know the entry was ever made."

"So I guess I'd better go have another talk with him."

"Please don't," Nancy urged earnestly. "Let's go to the police instead. I promised a Detective Slater I'd tell him anything new."

David Rand considered a moment, then nodded. "Okay. Lead the way."

Detective Slater, with Nancy standing by, listened with a dead-pan expression to Rand's story. At the end he said: "Pretty thin. Lots of people show up in Southern Cal with forty grand."

"But not many of them," David Rand countered, "would pussy-foot into a girl's apartment to steal her diary. But okay. If you won't help me, I'll keep working on him myself."

"You'll keep out of it," Slater admonished sharply. He picked up a phone and called his switchboard girl. "Sadie, put in a call for me to Boston. Get Homicide there. . . . That's right. Slater talking. I want Homicide, at Boston, Mass."

He cradled the receiver. "Now look," he said. "Kalland either is or isn't Halleck. I don't think he is. But it's up to Boston. It's their baby, because Metcalf was killed there. I'll let you know what they say."

It was a dismissal. As David and Nancy started out, Slater called sharply after them: "And stay away from Kalland. If he's innocent and you drag him into headlines, he could sue your ears off."

Nancy had left her sketching equipment in the hall. David Rand picked it up, and they strolled toward her apartment. Nancy asked: "How old was Halleck when he disappeared seven years ago?"

"Thirty-eight. It would make him forty-five now."

"Kalland doesn't look over forty. He has a car. In California that means his thumbprint is on his driver's license."

"But Halleck," Rand said, "was never printed. Never was picked up

for anything. No one but his wife remembers much about him."

"She would know him," Nancy said. "If only she were here!"

Arriving home, she invited Rand in. He declined with a shy grin. "Got to get back on duty washing cars. I'll check with you later, if it's okay."

Nancy hurried to the basement and found the janitor. "Listen, Olaf," she warned, "please don't say anything more about that diary of mine. It's all been explained now. And I want it dropped."

Olaf promised. After making sure he hadn't already discussed it with Kalland, Nancy went back up to her apartment.

She spent a restless afternoon there. Her mind kept treading and retreading over David Rand's story. Why did she believe it? Why did she like the man himself? And why had she always felt a faint distrust of Horace Kalland? A phony, David called him—a man behind a mask.

Nancy picked up her diary. She brought it up to date by jotting down the highlights of David Rand's theory: Forty thousand dollars missing from Boston seven years ago. The disappearance of Halleck. Kalland turning up at San Diego at the right time with the exact sum. Was Kalland Halleck?

A knock startled her. She opened her door, and there stood Horace Kalland—tall, dark, almost handsome, and quite composed.

"Doing anything tonight?" he asked chummily. "We're having a little celebration over at the beach club, and I thought maybe—"

"Sorry," Nancy broke in, "but I'm dated for tonight." Then, because she was desperate to know the truth about him, she forced a friendliness. "Won't you come in, Mr. Kalland? I was just about to make a cup of tea."

HE came in and sat down with a now-I'm-getting-somewhere expression. She went to the kitchenette and made tea. Serving him she asked: "Have you always lived in California, Mr. Kalland?"

"All my life," he said promptly.

"You have? Right here in San Diego?"

"No. I've only been here about seven years. Before that I lived in Long Beach."

"But you've been East, of course."

"Afraid I haven't." His eyes twinkled through the horn-rimmed lenses. "Not further than Phoenix. I'm a native son of the Golden West, Miss Waring."

It gave her a feeling of dismay. He'd hardly say that unless he could prove it. Yet if he could fake an identity, might not he also fake a past?

"I've some home work to do now," she said after the second cup. "Nice of you to stop in, Mr. Kalland."

That way she got rid of him. The next tap on her door came just as she finished supper. This time it was David Rand.

"Any word from Slater?" he asked eagerly.

"Not yet. But Mr. Kalland has been here. Come in and hear what he said."

She told him about the man's claim to a Long Beach residence prior to seven years ago. "And another thing: I have samples of his handwriting. What about Halleck's?"

He produced a sample of Halleck's writing which he'd brought from Boston. It was a photostatic copy of the suicide note that said: "*This is the last day of my life; good-by.*"

She brought out recent rent receipts, and they made a comparison. "The writings don't match," she admitted.

"So what?" David's jaw set stubbornly. "Seven years' practice would change it. You hold a pen a different way, and after doing it seven years you have a new handwriting."

"I suppose so. But how would he dare say he came from Long Beach unless—" A ringing of the telephone interrupted.

She answered and heard Slater's voice. It barked: "Know where I can find that Rand fellow?"

"He's here."

"Then hold him there. I'll be right over."

They waited a nervous ten minutes. Would Slater collapse the case against Kalland? Nancy looked at David's lined, anxious face, and she knew he wasn't at all sure of it himself. He was simply groping in the dark—groping and hoping, desperately.

Slater knocked. With her heart pounding, Nancy let him in and closed the door.

"I talked to Boston," he twanged at them. "Told 'em just three things: that Rand came here looking for Halleck; that he found a man named Kalland who showed up with forty grand about the time Halleck could have got this far; and that we know nothing else about Kalland except he's a pussy-footer."

"Didn't you review my complete theory?" Rand asked.

"No. Too much guesswork about it. I told 'em there's no case unless Kalland is Halleck. It's their baby, I said, and they could take it from there."

"What did they say?"

"They said they'd go into a huddle with Halleck's widow and call me back. Half an hour ago they called back. They said the woman doesn't think our man can be her husband,

but she won't sleep a wink till she's sure. So they're flying out here for a look at him."

Nancy asked breathlessly: "You mean Mrs. Halleck and a Boston detective?"

Slater nodded, adding with a grimace: "Cops are human. They hardly ever pass up a chance to see California at the taxpayers' expense. This particular cop was a flatfoot on the beat in Halleck's neighborhood seven years ago. He knew Halleck by sight. If both he and the widow say Kalland is Halleck, it's wrapped up."

"When are they coming?"

"By a non-stop flight, that'll put 'em here late tomorrow afternoon. They'll taxi straight to this apartment house. Posing as a couple hunting for housing, they'll ask Kalland if he has a vacancy. One gander at him is all they want."

As Slater left them, Nancy looked at the taut face of David Rand. She smiled. "Know what you're going to do now, Dave?"

It startled him. "What?"

"You're going to relax—loosen up, get that strain off your face. You do it by taking me to a movie—the funniest comedy we can find."

Instantly he *did* relax. But something moist came into his eyes, and his voice had a choke in it. "It's the first time in seven years."

"That you've been to a movie?"

"No. That I've heard a girl call me Dave."

She took his arm and laughed. "Okay, Dave. Let's hurry, or we'll miss the curtain."

IN the morning it was Nancy who couldn't relax. Suspense held her like steel springs. A plane was winging west with witnesses—witnesses who could indisputably confirm or deny the hopes of David Rand.

David came over in midafternoon. "I've checked the flight," he said gravely. "It's on time. They'll be here in an hour."

"Slater will meet them?"

"Yes. The Boston witnesses'll taxi straight here. Slater'll follow them in his own car, ready to make the pinch if they identify Halleck."

Nancy made coffee, but David left his cup untasted. He went to a front window and stood staring out at the street. "Last night," Nancy chided, "I had you loosened up. Now you're moody again. What's the matter?"

"I've thought it over," he gloomed. "And it won't clear me even if they say Kalland is Halleck. They can charge him with wife-desertion, that's all. It won't prove he killed Metcalf. Nothing can really help me unless they prove he killed Metcalf."

"But the forty thousand dollars? How can he explain it?"

"He could say he won it in a dice game. We'd know he's lying, but no one could prove it after seven years."

She stood by him at the window, and they looked out at the street. A boy was flying his kite there. A young couple passed, looked at the vacancy sign, hesitated a moment, then walked on. A taxi drew up, but it brought only a tenant of one of the upstairs units.

After a brooding wait David looked at the clock. "The flight's in now. It won't be long."

Presently another taxi drew up, and a middle-aged couple got out. The woman was thin, shabby, and a veil she wore didn't hide the harassed look on her face. Nancy felt David's hand grip her arm. "That's Mrs. Halleck," he whispered.

The man with her wore a center-creased felt hat, a pin-striped suit and square-toed shoes. Beyond them, another car pulled up and parked across the street. Slater was at its wheel.

THE pair from Boston told their taxi to wait. They came up the walk, and Nancy heard them enter the foyer. Then came a rapping, not at her own door but at Kalland's.

Nancy held her breath. She heard Kalland's door open. Then his courteous voice: "Yes? What may I do for you?"

The woman's voice said, "Are you the manager?"

"That's right. Are you looking for a vacancy?"

"Yes, we saw the sign, and—"

"I'll be glad to show it to you. Come right in."

They heard the door close. Nancy's eyes met David's. He looked dejected and beaten, and she had the same feeling herself. Surely Mrs. Halleck would have recognized her husband immediately.

David sagged into a chair and rolled a cigarette. By the time he'd lighted it, they heard the couple from Boston emerging from number 100. They could hear Mrs. Halleck saying: "Thank you, Mr. Kalland. But I'm afraid it's more than we can afford."

"No bother at all," Kalland said graciously. It wasn't the tone of a man who'd just been confronted by a deserted wife.

From her window Nancy saw them go to the taxi. Slater was waiting for them there. He conferred with them in whispers. Then the Boston witnesses entered the taxi and were driven away.

Slater came dourly inside and tapped at number 101. Nancy admitted him. His dead-pan face stared a rebuke at David. His report twanged nasally. "They both had a good look at him, and they say he's not Halleck."

David gave a wry smile. "So I was wrong. Well, that's that!"

"One other thing," Slater warned him. "This closes the case against Kalland. Since he's not Halleck, we're not interested. And lay off him yourself."

"I'll keep away from him," David promised.

Slater turned to Nancy. "Too bad he had to mix you up in this. He just got off the beam, that's all. Well, so long." He went out and crossed to his car. They heard him drive away.

David's laugh was mirthless. "He thinks I'm stir-crazy. And maybe you do too."

"I most certainly don't," she said warmly. "You just happened to make a wrong guess about Kalland."

"So I'll be shoving off," he said. "Thanks for stringing along with me. Good-by."

Before she could protest, he was gone. And she didn't want him to go. He needed a friend—an encouraging friend, someone to help him forget those years behind stone walls.

Then she remembered he had a room across the street, and that he worked at a service station on the corner. She'd have her car serviced there, from now on.

Coming home from the office Monday afternoon, however, Nancy failed to find him there. The car attendant said: "You mean that washer we had? He quit this morning. Don't know where he went."

She went dispiritedly home and brought her diary up to date. After supper she telephoned the rooming-house across the street.

"Mr. Rand?" the landlady said. "He packed up and left."

It was art-school night. Nancy went there, but the sketches she made lacked life and feeling.

IT was the same at the office on Tuesday. And again on Wednesday. What was David Rand doing? Why had he so brusquely walked out of her life?

When Nancy came home from the office Thursday afternoon, she vacuumed her rug and wrote a few letters. Then she opened her diary and brought it up to date. The book was still open in front of her when the telephone rang.

She heard Central say: "Deposit ninety cents, please."

Coins tinkled. Who could be calling her on Long Distance?

"Nancy?" The voice was David Rand's, and there was a lift in it. "This is Dave, at Long Beach."

"Oh, hello! What are you doing in Long Beach?"

"Couldn't wait to tell you. I've nailed Kalland. We're coming right down there now to pinch him."

Breathlessly she asked: "You mean he's Halleck after all?"

"No, he's a man who killed Halleck—knocked him over for forty thousand dollars. I've convinced the Long Beach cops. They're driving down to San Diego to give Slater the dope on it. Meet me there—in Slater's office."

The phone clicked. He'd hung up.

She could hardly believe it. She tried to remember his exact words. The diary lay open in front of her. While his message still rang in her ears, she wrote it down as an entry: *Murder guilt pinned on Kalland!*

But why hadn't David given her details? She'd soon know. Long Beach was only a hundred miles up the coast.

In a tension Nancy left her apartment, locked the door and went out to her car. Minutes later she parked in front of the city hall. She rushed to the Police Department and found Slater in his office.

"I got a call from Long Beach," she announced jubilantly.

Slater grimaced. "Yeh? So did I."

"From David Rand?"

"No. From Inspector Calloway, head of Homicide up there. Look, sister, am I nuts? Or am I just a Boy Scout with a badge on?"

"They told you about Kalland?"

"Only that Calloway's on his way here to put a finger on him. He's coming by to see me first. You know anything about it?"

SHE repeated Dave's message. As she finished, he pressed a buzzer. A patrolman came in, and he snapped an order: "Stake out in front of Kalland's apartment and make sure he doesn't take a powder. Stand on the front walk yourself and put Kelly in the alley."

The patrolman hurried out.

"He won't try to get away," Nancy suggested, "because he doesn't know we ever suspected him."

Slater chewed his lip. "Yeh," he agreed, "that couple from Boston didn't give away a thing. It'll be a bombshell when we walk in on the guy. But look, sister. How did that boy-friend of yours dope it out?"

"Because he just *had* to. He has his whole life to live, and he can't even make a start till he corrects a mistake—a mistake made by stupid police."

Slater took no offense. "We'll wait and see, sister—just wait and see."

It was worth sweating it out to see David's face when, after an eon or two, he burst in with a police inspector from Long Beach. All the bitterness was gone from it. He looked buoyant, and years younger.

"Hi, Calloway," Slater greeted. "What's it all about?"

Calloway looked a bit sheepish. "Better let Rand tell it. He ran it down for us."



Dave grinned at Nancy. He ignored the others and told his story directly to her. "You helped a lot, Nancy, by tipping me that Kalland came here from Long Beach seven years ago. So I went to Long Beach. An eight-year-old city directory showed the name Horace K. Kalland. The address it gave was a cheap waterfront hotel."

"The Strand," Calloway put in. "A two-hundred-room joint that's always had a lot o' shifty customers."

"At the Strand," Dave said, "I found out that Kalland had been night clerk there for a year or so, just before he came to San Diego. It gave me an idea. So I made them show me the registry book used the last time Kalland was on duty. They brought it up from storage in the basement. I had a sample of Halleck's handwriting. So I turned to a date about three days after Halleck's disappearance and looked at the registrations. Not for the name Halleck, but for his handwriting. And I found it. It was made by a guest who registered as Thomas Wyatt."

"The present clerks don't remember the incident. But the oldest bellhop does. There was a fight in Wyatt's room the second night he was there. Wyatt was found badly beaten up, with his skull fractured. He was hustled to a hospital. So I checked with the Long Beach police, and they dug the case out of the files."

"Ten dollars in Wyatt's pockets made the police think it wasn't a robbery motive. They had no reason to think Wyatt might be a man from Boston with forty thousand in a suitcase. The hotel was a hangout for underworld bums, and any one of them might have quarreled with Wyatt. All the police could do was stand by Wyatt's hospital bed till he came to, then ask whom he'd had a row with."

"They did that. Wyatt was out of his head three days. Just before the

"Maybe he just asked Metcalf what he'd buried in the backyard."

end he had one clear moment. A doctor, a nurse and a cop were standing by. They asked the sixty-four-dollar question: Whom had he had a fight with? He answered with a name. They heard it distinctly, and it went down in the record. It wasn't Kalland's name. So there was no reason to suspect a night clerk at the hotel. The name he spoke clearly was 'Metcalf.'

Slater gaped. "Metcalf! You said he was the guy got killed six months before in Boston."

"Right. Halleck's half-awake brain, coming out of a fog, wasn't centered on Kalland's guilt. It was centered on his own. He meant the fight in which he'd killed Metcalf at Boston. They thought he meant the more recent fight in a Long Beach hotel. Halleck had a relapse and died within the hour. And cops went looking for Metcalf—a Long Beach Metcalf, not a man who'd been dead six months in Boston. No attention was paid to Kalland, who slipped quietly away with Halleck's forty thousand."

Calloway took it from there. "Handwriting," he said, "proves Wyatt was Halleck. Halleck's last word in effect confessed to his murder of Metcalf. Kalland, a snooping night clerk, had opportunity to enter Wyatt's room. Then right away he shows up in San Diego with the exact sum lost by Metcalf. What are we waiting for, Slater? Let's go pick him up."

They went out to a police car. As they drove off, David and Nancy followed them in Nancy's coupé.

A patrolman was waiting in front of the Kalland Apartments. "The guy hasn't come out," he reported.

They went in and rapped on Kalland's door. No answer. They tried the door. It was locked.

"Get the janitor," Slater barked.

Nancy stood in her own open door with David beside her. They waited breathlessly. Olaf came with a passkey. Slater unlocked Kalland's door and pushed it open.

Deadly fumes drifted out.

Slater yelled: "Get the windows open." With Calloway, he dashed in and opened every window wide. The room was rancid with gas. An unlighted heater was on full blast. Slater turned it off.

"There he is," Calloway said. "We're too late."

Horace Kalland lay dead on the divan. It was plain that he'd asphyxiated himself by sealing windows and turning on the gas.

"But how," Calloway wondered, "did he know we were on to him?"

"Search me," Slater muttered. "I thought he wasn't hep to a thing."

NANCY, holding tightly to Dave's hand, came fearfully to the open door. Then she saw it: A leather-bound book on Kalland's desk.

"Look!" she cried. "My diary! He took it again."

And for the same reason, no doubt, as before. He could do so more hopefully this time, because since the last snooping, she'd given him a date, and had later served him a cup of tea. The diary, he'd think, would tell him just how much of an impression he'd really made.

And Nancy remembered an entry she'd jotted down only two hours ago. The facts in Dave's telephoned message from Long Beach! And Kalland, of course, had read it. Looking out, he would then see a policeman posted grimly on the front walk.

By a stern irony, and yet inevitably, the book lay open at the entry with the latest date: August 30th. The writing there still said: *This is the last day of my life! Good-by.*

THE DISTINGUISHED AUTHOR OF "THE VALLEY OF THE GIANTS," "CAPPY RICKS," "THE PRIDE OF PALOMAR," AND MANY OTHER MEMORABLE STORIES HERE GIVES US A SHORT NOVEL OF THE RACETRACK IN HIS BEST VEIN.

DARK



THE death of Mike Shea and his wife in a plane crash occurred during one of the periods of adversity which come to all men who make a livelihood from race-horses. They left one child, Moira, twenty years old and graduated recently from a select school for girls; for the Sheas were not peasant Irish, and always educated their

progeny well, even if, on occasion, the schools had to wait for the tuition fee. The sale of the horses and tack barely paid Mike Shea's debts, leaving Moira with a three-thousand-dollar mink coat, less than a hundred dollars in

cash, and a coupé that had been a graduation gift from her father—he having been, as the saying is, in the chips at the time. She was on the point of selling the automobile when one of her father's old friends, now secretary of the California Horse Rac-

ROLINDA

by PETER
B. KYNE

Illustrated by
ORISON MACPHERSON



ing Board, high-pressured her into a job at a race meeting about to start at Tanforan Park. Here she kept the books of purse winnings, stakes-nomination fees, starting fees and the funds deposited by owners to guarantee the riding fees of their jockeys.

Now, the profits from racetrack operation are enormous, and since meetings last about forty-five days, salaries for this employment, though seasonal and brief, greatly exceed the salaries paid for comparable work in industry.

Moir was paid twenty dollars a day, and when she told her sponsor she would like to make racetrack employment a career he very readily placed her in the same position at each of the other five major California tracks, plus the ten-day meeting at the State Fair; if the racing schedules at the major tracks did not conflict, she could work the county-fair circuit too. It was, on



The attorney announced that he would settle for \$250.

the whole, pleasant employment, but it had two major drawbacks. It offered her no opportunity for the social association for which her educational background fitted her, and she was often embarrassed by offers of marriage from jockeys, trainers, owners and track executives, none of which she would have accepted even had she loved the proposer, for as Mike Shea's daughter, she had acquired too much experience of the feasts and famines that rest so lightly upon such men. Rather than marry a race-horse man

or indeed any man who did not have reasonable security to offer her, she was resolved to remain a spinster. Her dark beauty was a nuisance, she felt, not an asset.

One day in the corridor of the Administration building at Hollywood Park she passed a youngish man who bent upon her a quick intense glance of interest and admiration, then looked quickly away as if he had committed an impertinence he regretted. Moira was interested, for it had been her experience that the men of her

world always made a long bold appraisal of her. Thereafter they passed each other so frequently she could not forbear a suspicion that this was due to his arrangement, and so she began to notice him. It was obvious he was of Irish ancestry, and she guessed he was old-country Irish because he was so shy and apparently modest—something she knew was indigenous to the native stock but all too often gone to seed in the second-growth Irish. Of course his pretense that she was of no interest to him might be the result of girl-shyness; on the other hand, he might be suffering from a feeling of inferiority, for he was rather a shabby person. His old suit of Donegal tweeds was worn and shapeless; likewise his hat, although he wore it at a jaunty angle; and his heels were run-over. He was quite good-looking and a big masculine type, probably on the sunny side of thirty; and Moira wished, for no sound reason, that he wouldn't waste his youth following the races. He looked sufficiently intelligent to know what the end of the road was like, and Moira would have relished an opportunity to lecture him gently on the futility of his efforts to make a living from the horses. She would even have cited her father's finish as an example, although she knew her sire had never known a moment of worry, even when down to small change. Men had liked him and trusted him; he'd thought nothing of borrowing from his friends when his luck went sour; nor did they hesitate to borrow when theirs went sour.

IT was not infrequently that an owner, when doing business with Moira, would confide that he expected his entry that day to win. Perhaps the animal was particularly sharp, or had been dropped in class for this race, or had needed his last race, in which he had done miserably. Impressed with his feed-tub information, Moira would make a six-dollar combination bet on the horse—that is, two dollars to win, two to place and two to show. She could not afford to bet very often, and combinations gave her a chance, for if the horse failed to win or place he might show, and at a price that would save her from loss or make a slight gain. She knew she couldn't beat the races, and hers were all fun-bets, really. Infrequently she would make a daily double bet, which is made on two horses—one in the first race, coupled with another in the second. If the first horse wins, the entire amount of the pool, based on the amount of daily doubles tickets sold, is parlayed on the second horse and the payoff is decided equally among the lucky holders. Indeed, a two-dollar daily double bet has been known to pay more than ten thousand dollars.

For the sake of the mild interest involved, Moira kept a meticulous record of her petty gambling activities, and on the last day of the meeting at Bay Meadows she discovered she was sixty-four dollars to the good. That morning an owner confided that he expected his entry to win the second race handily, and why. On the record of his last three starts, he would be neglected in the betting and should be a nice overlay. He suggested that Moira wager two dollars on him to win.

Now, the last day of a race meeting is, traditionally, getaway day, when owners hope to win at long odds with horses with mediocre records they have been holding for a surprise. . . . And when, on getaway day, one finds oneself a winner on the meeting, it is human nature to be reckless and exceed the speed limit on one's betting. When Moira discovered that only eight horses would start in the first race, she decided to assure herself of a winner by making four two-dollar bets on each horse in the race! The winner paid \$68.20 for two-dollar tickets, and Moira had \$272.80 riding on her tipped horse in the second race. He won and paid \$32.80.

Moira was waiting close to the cashier's window, and the instant she heard the result of the daily double announced over the public-address system, she cashed her tickets and fled to her office with a small fortune. She had collected \$2,270.20 on each of her four tickets.

And although the race reporters dashed alertly to the windows of the daily-double cashiers in the hope of getting a story from the winners, they were too late. The cashier reported that a girl he did not know had bought the only four winning tickets and had already cashed them. Thus Moira received no publicity and escaped the boredom of being identified thereafter as the girl who had won four daily-double bets that had paid \$2,270.20 each. Doubtless, too, she escaped visitations from sharpshooters anxious to induce her to invest her unearned increment in hazardous enterprises.

FOR Moira had an objective now. After paying her income tax, she would have a fair sum laid by, to which she would add her savings for the next five years, then resign and open a small dress shop in the financial district in San Francisco. Girls in business offices would be her customers, attracted by the lower prices she would be enabled to make them, as against prices in the department stores, by reason of small rent and a small stock with frequent turn-over. She would hire a saleswoman who was also a competent buyer. Thereafter she

would be independent and would have a permanent home.

The next meeting would be the winter meeting at Santa Anita Park and there she would meet a multi-millionaire who had retired from business to get his fun out of breeding and racing thoroughbreds. Pappy Hayes would advise her in the investment of her money. So she expressed it in cash to herself at Arcadia, the post-office address of Santa Anita Park, and followed it in her car. While awaiting an opportunity to consult Pappy Hayes, she cached all her money in a locked drawer in the safe where she kept the funds she collected for her employers.

THE Santa Anita Park meeting opened, as usual, on a Saturday. The following Friday about noon the shabby young man appeared before Moira's window, announced that he was Gerald O'Malley and that he was in a dreadful jam. *I smell a touch*, Moira reflected. *Goodness gracious, he's much better looking than I supposed; maybe he has a way with girls and knows it, and has decided to put the bee on me.* She said, without interest: "Ah, that name is familiar to me. You are the owner of Dark Rolinda, nominated for the San Fernando handicap, to be run tomorrow afternoon. I have been expecting you to call and post your starting fee and jockey-fee guarantee. The dead-line is five o'clock this afternoon."

"Dark Rolinda has been attached for a debt I am unable to pay, so I'm hustling for funds to lift the attachment: otherwise she cannot start." He laid before her a writ of attachment and a summons and complaint in action.

Moira was not ignorant of such lethal documents, her father having had a few served on him in his time, and so she knew a deputy-sheriff was now guarding Dark Rolinda in her stall and would resist any effort of her owner to lead her up to the receiving barn an hour before post-time for the San Fernando. Moira felt faintly embarrassed to meet Mr. O'Malley under such distressing circumstances, and to hide it she said casually: "I take it you have provided the five hundred dollars' starting fee and the jockey's guarantee, Mr. O'Malley?"

"I have it in my pocket—and had to sell my automobile, my horse trailer and all my tack with the exception of a racing bridle and blinkers to get it. And now, unless I can induce somebody to lift that cursed attachment, I'm ruined, for the mare can win the San Fernando as easily as Citation or Assault can beat a mule."

Moira gave Mr. O'Malley a cold stare. She knew he had decided, for some obscure reason, that as a Good

Samaritan she had possibilities. He flushed and said: "It was in my mind, provided you would rescue me, to repay you for the advance on Tuesday next, and give you a bonus of twenty-five hundred from my share of the purse. Second money in the San Fernando last winter was twelve thousand dollars, and even fourth money would enable me to repay you, but without the bonus."

"This morning's *Times*," observed Moira, "carried in the sporting section an amusing story regarding you and Dark Rolinda. It appears the mare was bred by Pappy Hayes. After starting eighteen times in six-furlong races—and less, as a baby—and getting back to the finish about the time the horses for the next race were coming on the track, Pappy sold her to you for five hundred dollars, to be paid for out of the first purse she might win. If, before she became a four-year-old, she had failed to pay for herself, then you are obligated to van her to that lion farm in South Pasadena, and send Pappy the check received for her carcass—probably fifteen dollars, which is pretty cheap lion food. I imagine your creditor read that story, and upon discovering you planned to pay five hundred dollars to start her, he decided that if you had that much money to throw away on your steed, he should have it, so he entered suit and attached."

"The San Fernando, Mr. O'Malley," continued Moira, "will be run at nine furlongs, which seems too long for a nag that couldn't win at six furlongs in a purse race, while the San Fernando is a stake for mares and fillies for fifty thousand dollars added to the nomination and starting fees, and has, naturally, attracted the best of that sex now racing in California. I doubt that she could win if she was weighted so light a leprechaun could ride her. At that, the racing secretary has given her ninety-eight pounds, which proves what he thinks of her chances."

MR. O'MALLEY replied plaintively: "Everybody considers me a bit simple; but do I look like a man who would beggar himself to get together five hundred dollars to start a mare with her history if I didn't know that tomorrow she'll run as if wolves are chasing her—if that attachment is lifted?"

"I do not detect a maniacal gleam in your Hibernian orbs, Mr. O'Malley, but surely you know that there are dozens of reasons why the best horse in a race can finish last."

"Dark Rolinda can win unless she strains a ligament or falls down in the race."

"The race will be run in slop; and in slop, horses often slither and slide and fall."



"The weather man predicts heavy rainfall tonight and tomorrow forenoon, but clear bright skies in the afternoon. By the fourth race the track will have dried out just enough to guarantee a deep, holding surface—and mud is Dark Rolinda's delight."

"When you acquired the mare, were you aware of her dark past?"

Mr. O'Malley nodded.

"Certainly. And I knew, too, that she was inbred with two crosses of Star Shoot blood, only two removes, on the side of both parents. This, it was hoped, would insure speed in their offspring; but what Pappy Hayes, and apparently, his trainer who succeeded me (Pappy dismissed me for incompetence), did not know is that occasionally the Star Shoot line produces horses with thin shelly hoofs. A plater in whom I had confidence told me Dark Rolinda was so afflicted, which accounted for her refusal to run on hard tracks."

"Ah," Moira murmured, "barking dogs, eh? I've had them, from standing too long at this window. But go on with your story."

"I decided tender feet would slow up a courageous thoroughbred, but shouldn't make her quit to a walk. She didn't look too well to me, so I had a good veterinarian examine her. Miss Shea, the poor thing was clogged with intestinal parasites; hence she lacked the vitality and desire to run and *had* to quit in a race. After acquiring her, I cured her with

O'Malley hurried over to her car and gazed at her reverently. "As they say in the old country, Miss Shea, 'May the heavens be your bed.' I cannot find words to express my gratitude."



daily doses of sulfathiazole in her mash, and now she's wishful to jump over the moon."

"How interesting! After reading the *Times* story, I ran down her racing record and discovered she has never run in mud. So why are you so confident she can win in mud—if you get that attachment released?"

"Everybody's been asking me that question, Miss Shea, but you're the first person to get the answer. The Bay Meadows track has a soft cushion of loose dirt—a top dressing—and the mare did very well on that, and this fall I got her into condition there with long slow works, the way we do in Ireland. I stayed on in the stable after the meeting closed, to finish her training after all the other owners had gone South. . . . Well, you may recall that track had deep mud the last week of the meeting, and the rain kept falling for a week after everybody was gone but my exercise-boy and me. One morning I told him to

set her down for nine furlongs as hard as she could foot it, and to gallop out the quarter if she still seemed willing to go on. Boy, and exercise-saddle weighed 128 pounds—she's a big strong animal, and I wanted to see if she could carry weight. She could—and I clocked her in time that told me I had the San Fernando at my mercy, provided it was run in deep mud. I'm not a religious man, Miss Shea, but I've prayed for mud when what I needed was a steak."

"Are you aware that you can release that attachment by filing a bond with the sheriff?"

"The deputy sheriff sent to seize the mare was good enough to bring out application forms from three surety companies; but after I fill one out, no bond can issue until I have been thoroughly investigated, for which reason they demand the names of three reputable citizens who will speak well of my integrity and financial sinews. I haven't been in this coun-

try long enough to have my integrity questioned. I've paid my bills and borrowed from no man—and, of course everybody knows I'm a financial wreck, else I wouldn't have been able to buy Dark Rolinda on the cuff."

MOIRA, despite a resolution not to be affected by his hard-luck tale, could not help feeling sorry for the man, for his story had the ring of truth in it. "And, of course," he went on, "I couldn't secure the bond today, and tomorrow is Saturday, and the bonding-company offices are closed for the long week end. Tomorrow is Sunday, and Monday is Christmas day."

"What is the nature of the debt for which you have been sued?"

"A surgeon's fee. When my late wife's illness was diagnosed as cancer this man was engaged to operate. I knew he was high-priced but also that he is a very fine surgeon, and I wanted the best for Eileen. After making the incision he discovered it was too late to operate, so he closed the incision and my wife died two weeks later. His fee for the operation was to be a thousand dollars, but he didn't work more than five minutes, so when he billed me for a thousand dollars I told him I did not consider that fair and offered to settle for five hundred. He said his professional dignity would not permit of fee-cutting, so there the matter has rested until this morning."

Moira said: "May he acquire the seven-year itch and scratch himself to death."

"Would you consider helping me? The mare will pay better than 100 to 1 and now that you have a bona-fide tip on her, you can win a fortune."

"I fear, Mr. O'Malley, I would be considered just a bit simple if I did that."

"I wouldn't think so."

"But I would. I do not know you, and I have no confidence in your mare's ability to win, even though you are so high on her. After my father's death I discovered in his trunk I.O.U.'s for thousands of dollars I couldn't collect."

"It's not that Father's debtors were dishonest, but because they're in the money and out of it, and would pay if I could catch them in funds. And what makes you think I'd be soft enough to make the loan, or that I, a working girl, would have a thousand dollars to loan, even on sound security?"

He replied patiently: "The day you made your daily-double killing at Bay Meadows, I was standing right behind you and heard you ask for four tickets on each horse in the first race coupled with Rusticon in the second. I was risking two dollars on a daily double that day. I realized somebody



—the owner, probably—had told you that Rusticon stood a good chance of winning. I suspected you had discovered you were a sixty-four dollar winner on the meeting and had decided to risk it all. Simple as I am, I can do simple sums so I know you won slightly more than ten thousand dol-

lars, and I doubt that you have lost it since. You could not afford to be dashing from your office upstairs to the mutuels to bet on every race; and besides, you are a two-dollar better. So you must have the money still. Therefore it occurred to me you might care to make another killing; for those

who bet—particularly the Sheas—on velvet are apt to be reckless, and for the opportunity to place heavy wagers on a sure thing, you might be sporty enough to make it possible for the mare to start.”

“I cannot afford to, Mr. O’Malley. I’m a lone lorn woman. Because I



"Every morning I heated water and bathed my son and washed out his little things."

prefer a farmer on such lands as a reasonable guarantee that the loan will be repaid, and they do not relish the prospect of eventual foreclosure. Here is a certificate of title dated a week ago. If you would accept my note, payable next Tuesday, plus the bonus, you could, if I failed to pay, enter suit and attach the land."

"I am not in the banking business, and neither am I a loan shark, Mr. O'Malley. You will have to try somebody else."

"Please forgive me for bothering you with my troubles, Miss Shea. You were my last resort. . . . I thought that you, being a Shea, might believe an O'Malley was not out to swindle you. Thank you for listening to my tale of woe."

"My mother was Norwegian and Dutch, Mr. O'Malley."

"Conservative people. They look before they leap."

HE managed a little smile, albeit one somewhat twisted, before he went out; but she knew he was hurt and hopeless, for five minutes later she discovered he had left his documents on the window sill. She placed them in the safe, set a sign in the window, BACK IN FIVE MINUTES, and went into the racing-secretary's office. "Are you," she queried, "acquainted with Gerald O'Malley, whose mare Dark Rolinda has been nominated for the Fernando?"

"I know him quite well, Moira."

"Please describe him."

"Well, he's a light heavyweight with hair of the shade known as Titian, brown eyes, and inhabits a badly worn suit of Irish tweeds. He's Irish but he doesn't speak with the slightest brogue: in fact, his English is impeccable."

"Dublin Irish?"

"Anglo-Irish, from the North, but a graduate of Trinity College in Dublin."

"I recognized that soft Dublin speech. My father had it. Do you know anything of O'Malley's background?"

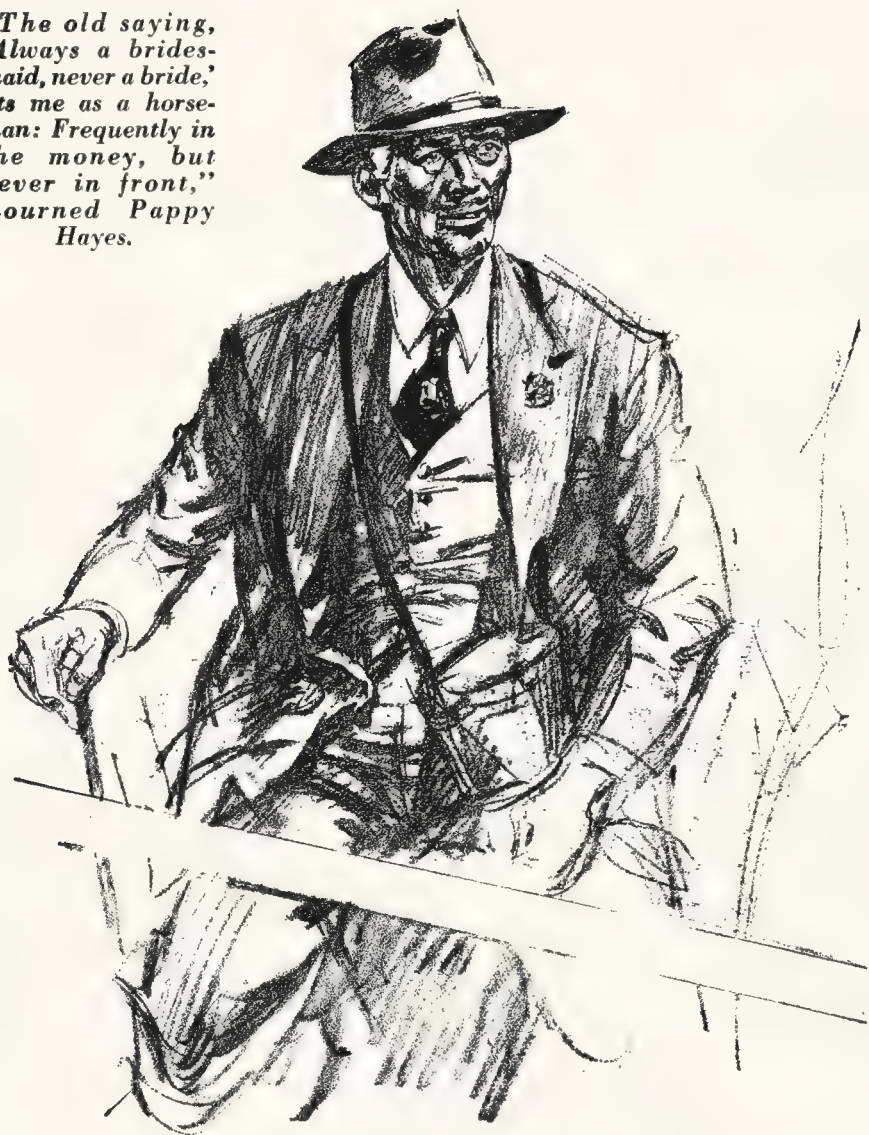
"Yes. I knew his late wife. She told me about him—she was bitter about his family. Gerry was the youngest son: and the O'Malley family has, for generations, been county aristocracy, and bred and sold and raced thoroughbreds with considerable success. The estate was entailed, the O'Malleys being British subjects, and Gerry faced an indifferent future. As a younger son and not likely to inherit the entailed estate, three professions

have been the beneficiary of a miracle, my future is brighter, and I have no intention of permitting my sympathy or my yearning for sudden wealth to dim it."

"Well, now, I have a counter proposition, and you can loan the money without risk of losing it. In the Santa

Clara Valley I have a hundred and sixty acres of excellent agricultural land, unencumbered—which is no fault of mine, for recently I tried to raise a loan on it, only to discover that banks are not interested in making loans on a small non-operating farm owned by a race-horse man; they

*"The old saying,
'Always a brides-
maid, never a bride,'
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never in front,"
mourned Pappy
Hayes.*



were open to him—a commission in the British army or navy, or holy orders. However, he must have stood in well with the Little People, because he bought two tickets in an Irish Hospital Sweepstakes, based on the running of the Grand National. One ticket won first prize and the other won second prize—and the total was about a hundred and fifty thousand dollars.

"Immediately he married a Catholic girl of excellent family—her father was a Dublin doctor—but his family considered he had let the O'Malleys down, so Gerry was an outcast. He and his bride came to the United States. Both were horse-crazy and wanted to investigate racing in the United States. The size and number of big stakes attracted them. They bought a hundred-and-sixty acre farm in the Santa Clara Valley; it had a house and stables on it with some thirty stalls, and had been owned by a man who bred and trained show horses and boarded them. The show-horse business petered out after racing

was legalized in California, and the man went broke.

"O'Malley bought the place cheap from the bank that had foreclosed on it. Always a student of the horse, he believed that the best horses are bred in semi-tropical countries; he'd noticed how well Chilean and Argentinian horses did in the United States, and of course the foundation sires of the thoroughbred were desert-bred Barbs and Arabians. So the O'Malleys went to the Argentine and bought some two-year-olds bred to go a route; also some excellent brood mares, all of which had delivered winners. Picked up a young sire, too, by Hyperion, whose blood is very popular in this country. Shipped the stock north by steamer to Hoboken, rested it a few weeks and loaded it on cars for delivery in California. It would have been pretty expensive to insure the shipment, so he took a chance—and out in New Mexico a cloudburst roared down on the train, rolled the cars containing the O'Malley horses into a gully and drowned them."

Moirra exclaimed involuntarily:

"Oh, dear! Such dreadful luck!"

"Of course he filed a claim with the railroad, which rejected it, claiming the loss was an act of God. He sued and was awarded a judgment in the District Court, but the railroad appealed, and the case has been hung up ever since in the Circuit Court of Appeals. Following his wife's long and expensive illness and death, O'Malley ran out of money."

"Poor fellow! He hoped to develop those Argentine colts and sell them at a big profit. Now his last hope of recouping his fortune lies in Dark Rolinda—and this morning the surgeon who attended his wife has sued him and attached Dark Rolinda. He was at my window a little while ago to tell me about it. He has the starting fee and the jockey-fee guarantee but, of course, he'll not post that unless he is assured he can lift the attachment so the mare can start. I told him the deadline for paying the starting fee is five o'clock this afternoon. He's very unhappy."

MOIRA saw no reason why she should give the racing secretary the entire details of the story. He was saying regretfully:

"He must have offended the Little People, Moira, because bad luck is piling up on him. He has a son about three years old. I suppose he boarded the kid somewhere until his credit ran out; then he brought the boy to his tack-room, and has been trying to care for the child there in his clumsy way. Yesterday some do-gooder noticed the youngster was bedded on straw in a corner and had had skim milk and dry cereal for breakfast, so he telephoned the Los Angeles County Child Welfare Board, and a woman came out to investigate. I gave her a pass to the stable area. Ten minutes ago she returned with a deputy-sheriff to serve a warrant of arrest on O'Malley on a charge of child neglect, and she has an order of court for the child."

"Goodness gracious! I think he's headed back to his tack-room now and they'll pick him up there. What will they do to him?"

"They'll tuck him into the county jail until he makes bail. Then he'll be tried in the Juvenile Court and will have to show cause why his son should not be taken from him, made a ward of the court and sent to a foster home where he'll receive good care. If that resolute woman investigator makes out a case against him the judge may give Gerry sixty days in the pokey."

"I wish I hadn't asked you about the man!" Moirra murmured.

She returned to her office. At two o'clock she telephoned the county jail in Los Angeles and was informed that

one Gerald O'Malley had been duly booked there but had sprung himself with five hundred dollars bail. His trial was set for Tuesday.

Moira was relieved. How fortunate the man had his entrance-fee money in his pocket! Well, she'd have to do something for him now, if she expected to live with herself hereafter; the smart thing was to help him as inexpensively as possible. So she telephoned the lawyer who had filed the suit for the doctor, introduced herself and gave the track telephone number and her extension number. "In the matter of the mare, Dark Rolinda—" she began.

"My client will not consent to an adjustment of his fee," the lawyer interrupted.

"I think he will," Moira replied smoothly. "I am the person who receives all stakes nomination and starting fees at Santa Anita. Dark Rolinda was to run in the San Fernando handicap tomorrow afternoon but the attachment, of course, will prevent that unless your client settles with Mr. O'Malley before noon tomorrow. He hasn't the money to release the attachment; all he has is the five hundred dollars starting fee and the jockey's guarantee—and this afternoon he was taken away to the Los Angeles county jail on a charge of child neglect. So this puts him a 'The hell with it' mood and blocks his efforts to borrow the money. However, he has a \$250.00 credit in my office and I am empowered to offer you that in full settlement of your client's claim."

"All or nothing, Miss Shea."

"IN that event your client is now the owner of a one-horse racing stable grossly over-valued at \$250.00. The mare is now guarded by a deputy-sheriff. If he is a humane man he will feed and water her, although that is not his job. Legally your client is responsible for her well-being now and I warn you that incorrect feeding may induce a fatal colic, in which event your client may find himself defendant in a suit for damages amounting to much more than a thousand dollars."

"We'll accept that risk, Miss Shea."

"It is a rule at this track that stall space shall not be allotted to any horse not destined to run at this meeting and since, obviously, Dark Rolinda is in that category, a track-security policeman will lead her out of the area at five o'clock this afternoon, hand her halter-shank to the deputy sheriff and wish him well. You had better make arrangements for accommodation for her, plus competent care."

"I'll have to look up the law on that point, Miss Shea."

"It requires no looking up. If you sue me for a bill and attach my auto-

mobile the deputy sheriff will roost in my garage or in front of it, day and night, with his wages charged to me—and if I do not pay them you will have to because the sheriff will sue us both. If then my landlord dispossesses me for non-payment of rent he can open the garage door, push my car out and close the door again—and the deputy sheriff will have to store the car in a fireproof garage; if he parks it at the sidewalk and sits in it and another car crashes into it, who is responsible for the damage repair if the driver of the other car is unable to pay or is a minor and can't be sued or has stolen the car he's riding in?"

The attorney said he'd consult with his client and call her back, which he did in ten minutes, to announce that he would be in her office at four o'clock to settle for \$250.00.

From the racing secretary Moira got a pass into the stable area and at five-thirty halted her car in front of Stalls 28 and 30 in Barn 28. Gerald O'Malley was leaning on the half door of Dark Rolinda's stall watching that equine enigma munching her hot mash. "Hi, the O'Malley!" she called cheerily. He hurried over to her car and gazed at her reverently. "Has the enemy retired?" she queried.

"Yes. A telegram came from the sheriff ordering him off the job. I suspect I am indebted to you for that?"

"Not deeply, Mr. O'Malley—only for \$250.00. I pulled that doctor off his high horse and had fun doing it. Here is his lawyer's receipt for settlement in full," and she handed it to him and merrily told him of the blazer she had run.

"Thank you," he said, but drearily. "You're very wonderful, but still I cannot start the mare. I haven't the starting fee now. It went for bail."

"I paid it and the jockey's guarantee for you and here are my official receipts. The half Irish in me, Mr. O'Malley never does a halfway job. And here are some souvenirs for you," and she handed him the summons and complaint in action and the writ of attachment.

TO her amazement, his nice brown eyes grew moist and she saw his Adam's apple working overtime. "If Dark Rolinda decides to pay these advances, Mr. O'Malley," she went on, "that will be very nice. Otherwise, forget it, as I shall. You have too many troubles to add to them worry over a debt I shall regard merely as a bet I made and lost." She thought then: *If he's a moocher he'll ask me for more money to bet on the mare.* Aloud she said: "I know how close to sudden death it must be to have a 100-to-1 shot in the bag and not be able to bet on it, so I brought along

five hundred dollars for you to wager on your mare."

"You are marvelously kind but I shall have to be content with the purse. I may not intrude further on your generosity."

"As you will. The winner's share of the purse will be \$34,500.00." She saw he was deeply moved and to spare him embarrassment she released her hand-brake and said: "Well, good luck to you tomorrow, Mr. O'Malley."

"WAIT a moment, please. Is it permitted to inquire why you changed your mind?"

"I didn't change it, Mr. O'Malley. I didn't want the job and thought my refusal would force you to work the other side of the street, but if by five o'clock you hadn't paid your starting fee I'd know, of course, that you had failed to lift the attachment, so I would have paid your starting fee and the jockey's guarantee and lifted the attachment tomorrow in time to get the mare into the receiving barn an hour before post-time. However, shortly after you left my office I decided to check on you as an obeisance to my intelligence—I claim to possess some—so I asked the racing secretary about you. He said he thought you were a gentleman and told me how a run of hard luck had caused you to run out of money. And when he told me that Child Welfare Agency was about to heap more on you—well, I thought that was dirty pool and it got my Irish up and I decided to knock over everybody that got in your way. It's been fun."

"As they say in the old country, Miss Shea, 'May the heavens be your bed.' I cannot find words to express my gratitude."

"Oh, phooey on gratitude. My information is that you will be tried in juvenile court on Tuesday. If Dark Rolinda wins you'll have a check for \$34,500.00 to wave under the judge's nose as evidence of your ability to give your child the best of care hereafter. I'm quite certain he will then dismiss the charge against you, exonerate your bail and order your son restored to you. Do not go to the expense of hiring a lawyer to defend you. In your case money talks. On the other hand, should the mare declare a walk-in strike on you I'll loan you a five-thousand-dollar flash roll, and this should be equally impressive."

"And after I return your flash roll, Kevin and I will be outcasts again."

"We'll cross that bridge when we come to it. Meanwhile you know Kevin is going to be well fed and bedded tonight. I can't believe he was neglected and ill-nourished."

"He wasn't. I'd steal for him first. I was down to dimes and I had to make them last until my ship came in.

He had whole milk, cereal (dry because I couldn't cook it) and orange juice for breakfast and he had lunch and dinner at the track boarding-house. I couldn't afford to eat there but I pawned my binoculars so he could."

"And what did you subsist on after the cashier at the track boarding-house punched the last hole in your meal ticket?"

"I have credit with the feed man until tomorrow; if the mare fails me then we'll both go hungry, but in the meantime I've subsisted on bran soaked in skim milk and carrots from Dark Rolinda's store. A monotonous diet and I've lost weight, but one can always do that which one has to do."

"You have in your pocket the money you intended to post for your jockey's guarantee?"

"Yes."

"Then please go down town tonight and for your dinner have a steak as big as a plater's apron. Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow you may be broke. That was Mike Shea's motto. Frequently he was broke but somehow we all ate well. How old is Kevin?"

"He'll soon be three."

"Small for his age?"

"He is not. The O'Malleys never sire runts. His clothes are made for four-year-olds."

"Well, if the mare isn't in the money tomorrow do not commit suicide," Moira adjured him whimsically. "Van her over to the lions and then look for a job rubbing horses. I'll take care of Kevin. I've always wanted experience foster-mothering. I hope the child was very clean when the Welfare woman took him; if he was unsanitary that will be an argument for the prosecution."

"Out between the barns you'll notice brick fireplaces where the horse-men cook their warm mashies in big double boilers. I have such a boiler and every morning I heated water and bathed my son in a feed tub and washed out his little things. As for his bed, what's wrong with that? Many a princeling, fleeing from a usurper, has slept on a truss of hay and wished he had a clean horse blanket over him."

"Good! Well, I shut up shop tomorrow afternoon long enough to see the race. I still think it'll be a death watch, but I'll say a little prayer for you. And," she added, "I'll be darned if I know why."

WHEN Moira left O'Malley she pulled in between two other barns until the quick tears had been wiped away and she could see to drive. Nor was she certain whether the tears had been evoked by pity for O'Malley or disgust because she had permitted herself to become involved in a stranger's

tragedy. She had been as happy as any working girl who nightly goes home to a lonely apartment and a portable radio—and now she had this O'Malley man to worry over. Confusion to people who didn't know enough to mind their own business! She parked downtown, had dinner in a restaurant and went shopping afterward, for during the holiday season the department stores remained open until ten o'clock. She bought a wardrobe for a boy aged four, several toys, a small Christmas tree and a holder and a string of small colored electric lights. She had decided that, win, lose or dead heat, the O'Malleys were going to spend a Merry Christmas together. Christmas was Monday. She found a butcher shop open late and bought a small turkey; the other requirements for the Christmas dinner could be ordered and paid for and picked up on her way home from work Saturday evening. Between the gentleman Irish and the gentleman English there was little difference, she decided. The United States of America, filled with generous people, bewildered them when their money was gone; they clung to their pride like boa constrictors to a shoit. She thought she had probably hurt the O'Malley pride but if so then it served him right for being an O'Malley. He could qualify for the police force mentally and physically—but would he? He would not. He believed he was going to win that lawsuit and that Dark Rolinda would win the San Fernando so he had starved, practically, and was shabby as a tramp in order to make a small fortune in less than three minutes—and if he won it he'd beggar himself again trying to double it. She wished she'd never met him.

BECAUSE of the Saturday crowd there wasn't a vacant seat in the grandstand, but Moira wasted no time looking for one. In his six-seat box just back of the finish line she saw multimillionaire old Pappy Hayes with his chauffeur, it being the latter's duty to do the leg work when Pappy made a bet, which was on every race because he could afford that luxury. Moira entered the box uninvited.

"Ah, Miss Shea. Welcome," Pappy greeted her, for he had reached the age when men like to bask in the radiance of good-looking young women.

"Thank you, Mr. Hayes. I knew I'd be welcome. Just want to watch the running of the handicap." She glanced over at the totalizer board, compared the odds on each entry number with the names in her program and discovered that there were (due to mud) only eight horses in the race, that Dark Rolinda was number eight and her odds listed at 99 to 1 which meant, of course, that they

were greatly in excess of this figure since totalizer boards are not wired to list odds in three digits. "I see your Galway Lass is the favorite at three to two," she remarked to Pappy Hayes. "She must be a superior mudder, or you'd have scratched her when the weather forecast was for heavy rain last night and this morning."

"Mud is her dish, Miss Shea. I think I'll win this stake—and if I do it'll be the first I've ever won, though I've been trying to breed stakes winners the past ten years. The old saying, 'Always a bridesmaid, never a bride,' fits me as a horseman: Frequently in the money, but never in front. I expect Galway Lass to lift the curse on my colors today. You have an opportunity to rejoice with me."

"Sorry, Mr. Hayes, but I'm the only cheering section Dark Rolinda has."

"Oh, no!" Pappy protested. "A smart girl like you, daughter of a shrewd horseman, going high on that equine faker? Why, she's one of my cast-offs."

MOIRA SHEA nodded.

"I know her history. My heart goes out to the underdog. I'd play your Galway Lass to place, but my father always assured me that only a boob would bet his money on a 3 to 2 to win. And to place—"

"O'Malley trained for me six months and never saddled a winner, so I let him go. He knows less about horses than horses do about him."

"I'll have to let you have it, Mr. Hayes: At a cost of fifty thousand dollars you imported a great sire—and thought you could get winners by breeding him to three-hundred-dollar mares. You got trash—and blamed Gerald O'Malley. When you thought you were selling him a worthless cast-off mare, he knew you weren't. The mare was far from well-loaded with intestinal parasites. She's in good health now and trained to the minute; and on her breeding, she should be a router."

"O'Malley didn't have five hundred dollars to pay for the mare, so I'm wondering how he got the five-hundred-dollar entrance fee together."

"He stands well with the Little People."

"Queer fellow. I registered that mare as Goofy Girl, and O'Malley spent money he couldn't afford to spend to have her name changed to Dark Rosaleen. Then he found there was already another horse registered as Dark Rosaleen, so most unwillingly he had to settle for Dark Rolinda. . . . Dark Rosaleen—I wonder where he picked that one up."

"The Irish, Mr. Hayes, as you should know, since your name indicates a touch of Hibernian blood, are a sentimental and imaginative people, so

they have symbolized their green, rocky, rainy land with three women. One wouldn't be enough for the Irish! There's Ould Grauna, the grandmother, doubtless a sweet old thing; there's Kathleen Na Houlihan, the stately lady in her middle thirties; and lastly the lovely dark young girl or colleen, Dark Rosaleen. Gerald O'Malley wouldn't waste oats on a mare called Goofy Girl. . . . There goes the bugle."

DARK ROLINDA walked sedately out the tanbark run from the saddling paddock to the track; and the instant she found a soft cushion of deep holding mud under her tender feet, she commenced to buck-jump playfully. "Look at her, Mr. Hayes," Moira urged. "Her coat shines like a dollar in a sweep's fist, indicating good health and loving care. Doesn't she look like a winner? Remember, she's big enough and strong enough to win with Joe Louis up, but she's in with a feather. Now that I've seen her I'm going to make a six-dollar combination bet on her." Moira left the box and hurried down to the huge mutuel room back of the grandstand, for she knew there would be long queues of bettors in front of the seller's windows, and if she delayed, she might get shut out, for the instant the horses leave the starting gate, the presiding steward presses a button which locks all the mutuel machines. Fortunately, she got her bet down with very little delay and was about to return to the Hayes box when she heard a whisper in her ear and knew at once that the ectoplasm of her departed sire was about to give her a tip on the race.

"What kind of a sport are you, Moira, avic?" she heard him say. "You've advanced more than \$750.00 to Gerald O'Malley because you're sorry for him. Do you ever feel sorry for yourself, saving something out of every pay-check toward that dress-shop? Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow you may be broke. Why scrimp for years, when by the exercise of just a little more courage than a cottontail rabbit, you can have a larger and very beautifully appointed dress-shop by spring? Would that intelligent O'Malley have gone through hell to enter his mare if he didn't know she'll win the San Fernando as far as you can throw a rock? How are you going to feel when she wins, and you find yourself clutching a wretched six-dollar combination ticket? Why, you'll hate yourself forever. Get two thousand dollars out of your cache and bet a thousand on Dark Rolinda to win, a thousand to place. You have time. There are never crowds in front of the hundred- and fifty-dollar sellers' windows. Forget the show. If the mare is in the money, she'll be on top;

and win and place bets will make you so much money you'll faint when the Collector of Internal Revenue gives you back the part he can't use! Hurry, mavourneen. Hurry!"

All the way down to the office safe there was a knock-down and drag-out fight between the Norwegians, the Dutch and the Irish in Moira's ancestry, but of course the Irish won, because they are never hobbled with conservatism.

Moira got her bets down on Dark Rolinda, and upon returning to Pappy Hayes' box was good-naturedly twitted about her combination bet. The show end of her bet had been lost with the two-dollar show bets of the bridge-jumpers who always risk two dollars on 100-to-1 shots, on the principle that they might win. "Those two-dollar bets of yours to win and place," Pappy told her, "stand out on the board like twin lighthouses in a fog. The crowd got a laugh when they were flashed on the board, because they're the only win and place bets on Dark Rolinda!"

JUST then the lights blinked out; when they came on again, Moira's two one-thousand-dollar bets had appeared. Pappy Hayes began to fidget. "Of course, O'Malley hasn't any money to get on his mare, but he's induced some boob to wager a thousand on her to win and a thousand to place—he, of course, to be given half the winnings, if any. That comes pretty close to touting. Still, it may be that Mick plans a massacre—by jiminy, just to be on the safe side, I'm going to bet five hundred rollars on my cast-off, to place." And the next instant the chauffeur was hurrying down to the mutuel room to make the bet. Moira hoped he'd be shut out, but Galway Lass delayed the start—she was always a cut-up at the gate. The chauffeur handed his employer the tickets just as the horses were sent away to a perfect start. Galway Lass, in Number 1 position, left like a cannonball, and running on the rail, was six lengths in front at the clubhouse turn. Dark Rolinda (Moira suspected her jockey was following orders from O'Malley) raced well on the outside, which is the long way home but obviates danger of a foul; also she escaped having mud thrown in her face by a horse in front. Some horses flinch from that—and one flinch can lose a race. . . .

Dark Rolinda moved up steadily and caught Galway Lass a little past the half-mile pole. Instantly Galway Lass spurred ahead, but Dark Rolinda was even with her in six strides.

"Your cast-off can run," Moira said. She couldn't help giving Pappy a small dig. "The boy on Galway Lass must have been instructed to make the pace. He expects Dark Rolinda to quit, but this is not her day for

that. She's going to run all the speed out of Galway Lass, Mr. Hayes. A quarter from home she'll have nothing left and will not be in the money."

And it was even so. "Dead heat," Pappy prophesied hopefully as the two horses, far out in front of the remainder of the field, came on nose and nose; then the boy on Dark Rolinda roused her, and she left Galway Lass faltering and dropping back; she won by half a dozen lengths, and carried her speed another quarter, which was O'Malley's sly way of advertising that Pappy Hayes' cast-off could do a mile and a quarter and would be dangerous at even greater distances.

Pappy Hayes said, as his entry came fifth: "Racing luck."

"Racing grandmother, Mr. Hayes! If Dark Rolinda ever races against Citation, she'll run his eyeballs out."

When the prices were flashed on the board, Moira figured on the margin of her program, and returned to the attack on Pappy. "She pays \$450.10 to 1 to win, and \$162.70 to place. Mr. Hayes, you have won \$31,150.00. Dark Rolinda is a California-bred mare; you bred her, and so you will receive from the management the breeder's bonus of ten per cent of the purse she won, which is \$34,500.00. I know, because it's my job to know. So this race you didn't win nets you \$34,600.00—more than if Galway Lass had won. Marvelous!"

Pappy was so rich that money no longer attracted him. "I lost that stake to a stable cast-off," he mourned. "The newspapers—all my friends—will kid me to death about that."

"One who bravely acknowledges he has erred is never teased much about it, and you can silence the critics by buying the mare back. If O'Malley will sell her for thirty-five thousand, would you have the hardihood to refuse to buy?"

"I'd be sorely tempted," Pappy admitted. . . .

Back in her office, Moira drew a check for \$34,500.00 in favor of Gerald O'Malley and had the treasurer sign it. She said O'Malley would want it that night so he could deposit it as soon as the banks opened on Tuesday morning.

AT six o'clock she drove down to the stable area, looked in over the half-door of O'Malley's tack-room and saw him sitting on a camp bed placidly smoking a pipe. "Hi, the O'Malley!" she greeted him. "Did the mare come out of the race sound?"

"Sound as a bell of brass. I've been sitting here asking God to shower down blessings on you, mavourneen."

"Thank you for that kindly thought, but don't you think you should know me longer than thirty hours before calling me pet Irish names?"

"I doubt if the day will come when I'll know you better than I do this minute. How truly feminine you are! At noon yesterday you'd have seen me in purgatory with my back broken before financing me, because you didn't want to be bothered; yet an hour later you'd changed your mind. I watched the board, and when I saw two dollars registered to win and two dollars to place, I knew exactly what you thought of me and my horse. Then the board registered a thousand to win and a thousand to place, and I said to myself: 'Gerald, no man could keep up with that one.' And when I realized you'd had an afterthought and bet another five hundred to place, I had the first laugh I've had in more than two years."

"WHY, I *had* to go overboard, Mr. O'Malley," Moira said gravely. "I had a vision of Mike Shea coming in for a landing beside me in the mutual room, with a great flapping of his wings and a look of extreme horror on his pleasant Irish face. He gave me hell for that six-dollar combination bet, assured me the race was in the bag, and that he, personally, had seen Satan turn his back on you. Naturally, following receipt of that sort of feed-tub information, I had no defense, and my conservatism melted like a dish of ice-cream in a boiler room. But do not credit me with that last-second five-hundred-dollar bet to place. Pappy Hayes made that one. I was in his box and saw him do it. When my two bets showed on the board, the old fox sniffed a massacre and decided to hedge."

"I've been indecent enough to hold a grudge against Pappy since he fired me as his trainer, advertised me as incompetent and thereby condemned me to death by slow starvation. How I needed that job! Well, God marks the sparrow's fall, and Pappy Hayes has an internal hemorrhage now."

"He'll probably flee to Darkest Africa to escape the fun that will be poked at him. But he's a resourceful man, so I wouldn't be surprised if to save face and pull the sting of misfortune, he'll try to buy the mare back." Moira was too tactful to tell O'Malley that she had planted that idea in Pappy's head, for she had seen enough of life to know that the managerial strain in women often leads to the divorce court. However, she ventured to add that if Pappy concluded to meet O'Malley's price, she hoped the deal would go through, but she did not insult the O'Malley intelligence by suggesting that, since Pappy had won nearly thirty-five thousand on Dark Rolinda, counting bet and breeder's bonus, that should be the price asked. She could, she thought, trust him to figure that one out.

"Why should I sell her?" he demanded. "She's sound; and since she will not run well except in mud, she'll not be raced much and should remain sound a long time. I've nominated her for the twenty-five-thousand added Annixter Handicap to be run at Bay Meadows in February and the fifty-thousand-dollar added Home-bred Stakes to be run at Tanforan in November. It's better than an even money bet both races will be run in mud—and she can pick up considerable money in lesser races at the same meetings."

Moira had expected no other answer. *The Irish run true to form*, she thought. *Whole hog or none—the stubborn apes!* "Don't ask me to advise you," she replied easily. "It's no business of mine whether you sell or keep the mare. I merely expressed the hope that you'd sell because, in a vague way, it has occurred to me that you're too young and much too nice to waste your life with race-horses. And I recalled that my father once refused ten thousand dollars for a horse he'd claimed for twenty-five hundred dollars and developed into a good handicap animal. And the next day, during his morning workout the nag broke a sesamoid bone and had to be destroyed. Mother and I had to sit up with Father that night to stop him from kicking himself to death."

Thereat Mr. O'Malley had the second laugh in more than two years. The Dutch and Norwegian blood in this one had not killed her Irish wit. A man would never be bored with her. A beautiful woman with wit and intelligence—glory be to God for creating her!

MOIRA WENT ON: "I suppose you'll spend time and money on Dark Rolinda, nominating her for stakes in the hope they'll be run in mud, only to discover they'll not. I suppose you'll manage to keep her in fair form at your ranch while you break, board and partially train other men's horses."

"The buildings and fences on that property were built with that object in view—only, the owner was a show-horse man. The war killed the horse-show game; the owner went broke and I bought the ranch by paying for the mortgage."

"After paying the income-tax on the money you won today will you have sufficient capital to support the enterprise? I have read that ninety per cent of all commercial failures are due to insufficient capital."

"My lawyer notified me on Thursday that the Circuit Court of Appeals had sustained a sixty-two-thousand dollar judgment against a railroad company awarded me in the District Court. He doubts that the company

will appeal to a higher court." He favored her with a little smile. "That news gave me the courage to ask you to aid me. I knew I'd be able to reimburse you before long."

"Why didn't you tell me that?"

"It was the last shot in my gun, and I had intended to fire it, but you dismissed me so definitely I knew further argument was useless."

"There are three kinds of Irish, Gerald O'Malley: Money-makers and misers and those that cannot stand prosperity. I'm going to discover which class you belong to. Of the bets I made on Dark Rolinda, half were made for you and for your son. Here are the tickets."

HE rifled through them, and his face lighted with delight. "I fear you're in the miser class," Moira said. "Money gives you great happiness."

"Money has nothing to with my happiness now. The fact that you did this emboldens me to say something now that I should say six months hence. It's no secret to you that for a long time I've been casting sheep's-eyes at you."

"A girl notices such things," Moira admitted; "but why did you have to appear so guilty about a few sheep's-eyes?"

"I knew great happiness with my Eileen; and when I lost her I promised myself I'd never look at another woman. Nor did I—until I saw you; and then the delight of seeing you bred a sense of disloyalty to my son's mother."

Moira did not consider this attitude strange or even unusual. She recalled hearing her parents discussing one of Mike's friends, who having (in the Hibernian vernacular) "buried" his wife three years before, had recently re-married. She recalled strangling a laugh when Mike had said, but without animus: "A hell of a hurry he's in to take a new wife, and his old wife not yet cold in her grave." Ah, the dear frauds, half man and half child, doomed never quite to grow up—and what a pity if they did!

The deathless racial characteristics of her father's people had never failed to interest and amuse Moira. They supped sorrow, not with a teaspoon but a soup ladle, enjoying every mouthful; to them, no joy was complete unless it was tinged with a faint melancholia; and she had often wondered, when reading Irish history, if the ease with which they embraced martyrdom was not really a form of racial self-dramatization. Perhaps Robert Emmet, although an Anglo-Irishman like Gerald O'Malley, really had a very good time during his trial for treason and subsequent hanging, because both afforded opportunity to say and do something so magnificent



"I've been indecent enough to hold a grudge against Pappy since he fired me as his trainer. . . . How I needed that job!"

no Irishman would ever forget to honor his birthday and mutter an *ave* on the anniversary of his death. She had often wondered if this urge to be magnificent was back of the undoubted tendency of Irishmen, of whatever social class, to be one-woman men, for very few of them were strays rounded up in Reno! *This Gerald O'Malley*, she thought, *might make an unhappy second marriage, but the darling jack-ass would keep his contract!*

She said: "The racing secretary told me something of the cloud that hung over your married happiness."

He said, but without bitterness, proving he was clannish: "My people considered her not good enough for an O'Malley because she ate fish on Friday, insisted we be married by her parish priest. (Many's the social drink and song-fest he and I had together! A rare sport, and I gave him a horse to ride to hounds.) And when my son was baptized in her faith—for I'd given my word of honor that if we had children they'd be raised Catholics—

my father, who was the Past Grand Exalted Ruler of an Orange lodge, refused to register my son's pedigree in the family Bible. There was no quarrel. He had his outlook on life and I had mine, and neither would change."

"Well, Gerald, you appear to be civilized. I must shove off now to my evening lamb chops and salad." She had a premonition he was about to ask her to marry him: she knew she would refuse him and the thought of hurting this man, to whom life had already given a sound thrashing, panicked her. Amazingly he said:

"I understand your hurry, but it has to be said now. If I delay, I may forfeit the opportunity to say it later. I love you, Moira Shea—perhaps not quite as much as I loved Eileen, because she gave me a son—but deeply and reverently. I could kill the man that whistled at you or referred to you as a nice cut of cheesecake. I hope one day to marry you, but I'll not ask you now. You're not a woman to

marry in haste and repent at leisure, merely because you feel pity for me and mistake it for love. I have a hope, however, that after you've had time to know me better, the bit of respect I suspect mingled with your pity when you decided to be kind to me, may develop into love. When it does, I'll know."

"Yes, pity and respect were mingled, Gerald O'Malley. I learned about your child and your dead wife *after* I'd refused to consider your request; when I realized you had been too decent to throw the child at me to soften my heart, I knew you were not a moocher, so I had respect for you. I had more respect when you did not brace me for more money to bet on your sure thing; when, to test you, I offered it and you declined. You have courage and character, and a man who can be faithful to an ideal will be faithful to his love—if she's worth it. In your queer roundabout way you have paid me a very high compliment; unknowingly you paid the same com-

pliment to Eileen, who made you so happy you yearn for the same happiness with a girl you think ranks in quality with her. But we will not, please, pursue the matter further. I could work overtime for years learning to love you as Eloise is said to have loved Abélard, but still I wouldn't marry you."

He took the blow well. "I'll not be a brittle boy and demand the reason. It's none of my business. So I'll consider I made a small bet with myself and lost."

"I'll tell you the reason: I'll embrace the lonely life of a spinster before I'll marry a horse-racing or horse-breeding man."

"To hear you talk, a body would think they're typhoid-carriers."

"My father was a race-horse man and a splendid conditioner of race-horses, but when a horse of his came down with the slows, he wouldn't get rid of it because, being a lovable man, he committed the cardinal sin of his guild. He fell in love with his horses; instead of selling them cheaply or selling them for dog-meat, he gave them long vacations on farms such as you will soon be operating—and that cost more money than the cripples were worth. He was so naïve I suspect he tried to crash heaven's gate on his owner's badge. If he hadn't been so lovable, Mother wouldn't have become a race-track gypsy with him. They couldn't bear to be separated—so they died together in a plane crash. She wanted brothers and sisters for me, but when one has no permanent base, babies are an embarrassment. She yearned for a home—and compromised for a room in a motel, a cheap furnished apartment or a third-rate hotel. She wanted security, and Father always said they'd get it yet—in gobs. He had faith that one day he'd pick a plater out of a claiming race and develop him into another Seabiscuit.

"Seabiscuit, you know, was started in claimers and nobody wanted the cast-off. Father's wonder horse was to earn half a million dollars, and when his legs got dicky he'd bring two hundred thousand as a sire, and we'd retire on that capital gain and live happily ever after, in Ireland—damned cold, rainy, foggy, boggy Ireland, with rocks sticking up out of its meager soil, Ireland that grows more and more beautiful to the exile, the longer he stays away from it!" She finished passionately: "I suspect that when the first blood transfusion was given an Irishman, a horse doctor was called in and a horse was the donor!"

"I'm dying of a broken heart," O'Malley keened, "and you make me laugh. However, now that the subject of blood transfusion has been

brought up, I sold three pints of my heart's blood for fifty dollars a pint to keep life in an exile until he could get home to Ireland to die. The contrary man wouldn't have plasma from the hospital blood bank, for fear he'd get the blood of an inferior race in his veins. I was at the hospital to visit Kevin, who was having his tonsils and other extraneous growth cut out, and stumbled into the old man's room by mistake. At sight of me, he yelled: '*Caid mille faltha*. Have you a drop or two of your rich Irish blood you could sell me, avic?' I thought of the bill for Kevin's surgery, so I said: "Faith then, and I have, ye ould vagabone, provided it's the right type. Ten thousand welcomes to you." Thinking I had the Gaelic—that was all I had—he asked no questions, and I didn't have to confess my father was an Orangeman!"

Moira had a suspicion he had invented that story to make her laugh, to save her from feeling sorry for him, to prove to her he could take it. She didn't laugh. She said gently: "You're sweet. Good-night, you wild rapparee."

AT four o'clock Moira again halted her car in front of the O'Malley stalls and found the O'Malley sitting on an upturned feed tub in the doorway of his feed- and tack- and living-room, enjoying the late meager winter sun and an auburn-haired, brown-eyed beautiful baby boy whose chubby legs straddled the O'Malley neck the while he hung on to the O'Malley hair.

O'Malley rose and said: "This is your work, mavoureen. Who but you would have this idea of a Christmas present for me? I've been expecting you."

Kevin inspected her gravely, then piped: "Are you my new mamma? Daddy said he was going to try to get me a new mamma for Christmas."

"Shame on you, Gerald O'Malley," Moira said, "to arouse such a hope in the innocent heart of that child, after what I told you yesterday."

"I believe only half of what I read and scarcely any of what I hear. Take him." O'Malley bent low and dumped his son into Moira's arms. She held him close and kissed his rose-petal cheeks and received a moist osculation in return. "Sit down on the feed tub," O'Malley suggested hospitably, "and tell me how you did it."

"Really, it was very easy, Gerald. I did some detective work over the phone and discovered the name and address of the Eager She-Beaver who kidnaped your son. So last night I sent her a special-delivery letter telling her a few things she thought were so, and which I assured her she would discover to her embarrassment and

chagrin were most emphatically not so, and that you would prove this in court on Tuesday. I wrote her, of course, on the stationery of the Los Angeles Turf Club to make my argument appear official, and told her you had, that day, in winning bets and a purse, enriched yourself to the tune of more than a hundred thousand dollars; that you owned a ranch worth a quarter of a million and a horse you could sell readily for twenty-five thousand, and with all that wealth would a man, known to be a thorough gentleman and so kind he put out a small bottle of *potheen* on his back porch every night for the fairies, maltreat the motherless son he loved above everything on earth?

"I told her she was in for a bad half-hour at the hands of your lawyers, who had just won a huge suit for damages for you against a railroad—and they had to be good to do that. I reminded her that she had sworn to the warrant against you, that you had been taken to the city prison and there mugged, fingerprinted and subjected to other indignities, including being thrown into the bird-cage with the scum of the city until you could secure bail."

"I got no farther than the booking sergeant's desk," O'Malley reminded her.

Moira shrugged.

"Why ruin a good story just because you happened to be an eyewitness? When I pour it on, I pour! I told her you would most certainly sue the City of Los Angeles for damages and couple her in the betting as an added starter, particularly if, as I feared, unpleasant publicity should develop. *That*, I warned, would mean a suit against her for defamation of character or criminal libel, and she'd wind up on the sidewalk and out of a job she evidently liked, and which I understood was quite remunerative. I warned her that her sole hope for escaping the punishment due her for her precipitate and not very intelligent action would be to deliver your son to you this afternoon—in person—apologize profusely and trust to your exuberant joy at having your son back for Christmas to expunge your very natural resentment.

"I told her you were a sweet-tempered man until aroused, when a wounded Nubian lion had nothing on you for ferocity. I suggested she would have no difficulty in convincing the judge that the case should be dismissed for lack of evidence. I warned her you would have the very best pediatricians in Los Angeles testify as expert witness that the child not only showed no indication of mistreatment and malnutrition but was actually bigger and fatter than the average three-year-old." Here Moira upended

Exhibit A and kissed each fat leg. "That's one truth I told," she concluded.

"And you thought up the whole scheme just like that, and it ran off your fingers like water out of the tap. The poor woman made delivery in person, and wept and begged my pardon. Of course I didn't scold her. The poor wren is fifty years old if she's a day, and she's been so busy minding other people's baby business she's never had time to marry and have kids of her own."

"Her kind," Moira declared, "always know all the answers to childhood's problems. I could throw rocks at her."

"St. Thomas à Kempis said: 'There is a chord in every human heart. If it can but be touched, it will bring forth sweet music. You touched the woman's heart.'"

"Too bad I didn't touch it with an ice-pick. Did she sing for you?"

"No, but she brought me a fifth of John Jameson, and I was weaned on that."

MOIRA started laughing and while she laughed she knew, in a vague way, that a tremendous change had taken place on the person of Gerald O'Malley. "Why, you're wearing your Sunday suit," she charged. "New Donegal tweeds, and fine English shoes and nice socks and linen and a tie I like, and a hat that fits your handsome face. Why, Gerry, you look very elegant."

"Not half as elegant as I feel. Pappy Hayes was down this morning and wore me out before I could get rid of him, which I finally did but at a sacrifice."

"What do you mean—a sacrifice?"

"I asked fifty thousand for Dark Rolinda, but in the end he outgamed me and I let him have her for thirty-five. She's in his barn now, and I have his post-dated check. He suggested that while one only had to pay income taxes on twenty-five per cent of the profits on the sale of a capital asset held more than six months, I might, if I included it in this year's income-tax return, find myself in another two-per-cent-higher surtax bracket. Probably four per cent."

"I hope Pappy will be sport enough to laugh when he sends his cast-off out on a hard track for a morning workout and discovers he has the same old headache. He ought to call it a dead heat!"

O'Malley said innocently: "How could I know about that? I never tried her on a hard track. I merely suspected she was allergic to them."

"The way money pours in on you! One day your luck has gone farthest south; the next day it's up under the Arctic Circle. I have a vision of you looking over the cream of the crop at

the next sale of yearlings at Saratoga and Keeneland."

"You and your visions! A body would think you're Joan of Arc. God forbid you'll ever hear voices. They put you in the booby-house for that, now, although in Joan's day it was a miracle."

"I hear the auctioneer's voice crying: 'Going! Going! Gentlemen, gentlemen! This brown colt is a steal for thirty-five hundred. Somebody be a sport and raise the bid. My hammer is up. . . . Going for the third and last time—ah, Mr. Gerald O'Malley bids thirty-five hundred—what's that? You only raise me a dollar? Shame on you. *Bang!* Hip Number 19 is sold to Mr. Gerald O'Malley."

"May mad dogs bite me if I ever own another thoroughbred!"

Moira jumped off the feed tub, in her excitement dumping Kevin on the ground. "What?"

"You heard me; but if it's any comfort to you, I'll put it in writing and attest it before a notary public. I'm no longer in the horse business."

"But your farm in the Santa Clara!"

"A person in whose common sense I have amazing confidence assured me it's good land for apricots and cherries. I doubt if I'll ever grow rich on apricots and cherries, but I'll be comfortably well off, contented and secure."

Moira came over to the O'Malley, grasped his coat by the lapels and shook him fiercely. "Is that renunciation of your way of life a trick to induce me to marry you?"

"It's not a trick, and I hope it's an inducement."

"Listen! Once I heard a young wife say to her husband. 'If you loved me, you'd buy me that cute little convertible. I know you'll have to go into debt for it, but you'll be making me very happy.' The brat was so sure of her ground. She had hysterics when he replied. 'Baby, that's the pay-off. You've just proved what I'd begun to suspect. You're vain and selfish, and if the measure of my love for you is that cute little coupé, the measure of your love for me is a kid's scooter. I'm off to Reno in the morning.' Gerry, one learns more by looking and listening than one does in great institutions of learning. When I told you last night I wanted security, I didn't mean safety. I meant security for my happiness. When I spoke of wanting a home, I didn't mean a nice home. I meant one that would make the man I married feel that here was sanctuary from a brutal world. That could happen in a tarpaper shack."

"YOU'RE going to marry me," he charged.

"I make no stipulations and never shall. In the matrimonial stakes in

which you and I are entered, my darling, there will be no fouling, clutching of saddle cloths, crowding or clever doping. We may not win first money, which is Happiness with a Capital H, but we'll be in the money. You abandoned horses because you thought it would please me. Well, just to prove to you a horse is not the measure of my love, you and I are going back to Saratoga, and I'm going to buy you the four fillies you set your heart upon; and on our ranch we'll break them and train them; and when they're fit to be sent to the races, we'll find a clever public trainer to handle them, which will give us an excuse to knock off for a day every little while to see them run. Later they will give you foals. A man has to have his kind of fun, though married, and I'm no kill-joy. And that's the way I love you."

THE O'MALLEY flipped the switch, and the box was in darkness as thick as the space between the barns. "There's a swipe across the way gazing at us," he explained, and helped himself to a big one. Then: "Take Kevin, mavourneen, and on to your car. I'll follow with my discarded wardrobe in a suitcase, and stow it in the trunk of my love's car."

"I have a huge garbage can at my digs, angel. And don't forget the *potheen*. I'll shake up a hot punch, with cloves and nutmeg in it, the way my father taught me, and we'll drink confusion to care."

As they rolled out onto the boulevard, she said: "I thought I'd like a touch of extravagance this winter—after winning that daily double—so I rented a nice five-room bungalow and hired a cook and housekeeper. She's cooking our Christmas Eve dinner now, and I have a new wardrobe for my little man, and a Christmas tree and some toys."

"By the beard of St. Patrick! You knew you were going to hook us."

"Of course. But not until yesterday."

"Is that when you fell in love with me?"

"I think not. I suspect I began to fall in love with you slowly, by remote control, months ago, but I didn't realize it until yesterday. Aren't you surprised, Gerry?"

"I am not. I knew yesterday too."

"You didn't!"

"I did."

"But how could you know?"

Mr. O'Malley found her hand on the steering wheel and took possession of it. "Drive with one hand, alannah. *How would you know?* says she. How did the doctor know when Kevin came down with German measles?"

"He broke out in little red spots."

"Exactly," the O'Malley murmured. "Exactly!"

The Shadowed Face

by DONOVAN FITZPATRICK

THIS was a barracks room on a military post in Colorado; and he had been awake for an hour, lying quietly on the narrow cot and smoking too much, waiting.

Now, when the hands of the clock stood at ten minutes to six, he threw off the blankets and went over to the window. The last day, Matt Riorden thought; and he shivered slightly, not entirely from the chill air. Dawn laid a thin gray light on the streets and tar-paper buildings of the post, on the sentry in front of General Gaylor's headquarters. From the window he could not see the R-9—the big hangar was in the way; but behind it the steel framework of the launching cradle towered into the mist like a ghostly skeleton. And higher, a disk of mottled silver in the sky, was the moon.

In the adjoining bath he showered and then shaved carefully, as if he were going to see his wife. Back in the bedroom he put on old-fashioned long underwear, then shrugged into a pair of coveralls. The coveralls were dark green gabardine and quite ordinary, except for the leather belt around the waist. The belt had four steel rings attached, at back, front and sides.

He stood for a moment, looking around the room. His Air Force uniform hung over a chair. For a moment he considered transferring the oak leaves to the shoulders of the coveralls, but decided against it. The clock read six-twenty. Time to go.

He walked down the corridor, a wide-shouldered man, of thirty-four years, with a rugged, homely face and a nose that had once been broken by sudden contact with an airplane instrument panel. At the door of Ralph Jessup's room he knocked and went in.

The civilian physicist stuck his head out of the bathroom. "Be with you in a minute, Major."

The Major sat down, thinking that at a time like this he ought to have something weighty and profound to say to Jessup, something in the spirit of Columbus or Magellan. What cas-

ual remark had Christopher tossed off as he stepped aboard the *Santa Maria*, bound for the unknown? But Matt Riorden had no ringing phrases on tap, and so he said: "Where's Lansing?"

"Headquarters, I expect," Jessup said, coming into the room. "A load of Pentagon brass flew in last night. Lansing is no doubt holding them enthralled with tales of high adventure."

Matt smiled, looking at Jessup with interest. The tall, gangly, sandy-haired man seemed no different than usual—neither exceptionally nervous nor elaborately casual; and Matt wondered if he were as calm as he looked. Probably. Jessup was pure scientist, and he never wore his feelings where they would show too much. He looked as if he had just stepped from behind a plow, but there was an air of quiet competence about him, and from the beginning Matt had felt he would be a good man to have along.

They left the barracks and walked down the street to the officers' mess. It was full day now, with small cumulus clouds beginning to form against a brassy blue sky, and the mountains bulking sharp and close in the clear air. Sixty miles east was Denver, and his wife; and the thought of her was like a leaden, hopeless ache inside him: Louise, whom he had not seen in two weeks, and might never see again. This would be a fearful time for her, he knew. She would be awake now, and watching the hands of the clock, waiting.

AT this hour there were a half-dozen officers at breakfast, and as Matt followed Jessup to a table in a far corner, he was conscious of their frank stares. "As if we were some kind of freaks!" he said as they sat down.

"Guinea pigs," Jessup said in his calm, slightly nasal voice. "We're very special. Either extremely heroic or extremely stupid, depending on how you look at it."

Matt shrugged and regarded his tray with distaste. It was the same breakfast — unappetizing, medically-prescribed—they'd had to eat for a

week; an assortment of food calculated to be nourishing, non-gas-forming—just dandy for the crew of the R-9. *How do they know?* he thought irritably. *Maybe I should be loading up on ice cream and pickles.*

"I HAD a little talk with Lansing last night," Jessup said. "Found out why he's so browned up at not being in command."

"Browned off, not up," Matt said. "And I know why. He can't stand being anything less than top dog."

"Uh-huh! But there's more to it than that. He told me that if we survive this trip, he's checking out of the service. Going to cash in on the publicity, whenever the news is released." Jessup stirred his cup of something that looked like coffee, but wasn't. "He knows the angles, all right. You should hear what he's got lined up for himself—magazine articles, lecture tours, offers of plush jobs from a couple of airlines. Even Hollywood."

"Okay, he's taking a calculated risk so he can make a hatful of money and maybe become another Errol Flynn," Matt said. "It's all right with me." He didn't especially feel like discussing the career of Major Alex "Speed" Lansing. In fact, he was weary unto death of Lansing. Speed Lansing, the first man to fly the PX-2, the jet that made the X-1 look like a lame turtle. A dozen other pilots, including Matt Riorden, had since flown the PX-2, but it was Lansing who captured the public imagination. Lansing, the first man to beat the sun—taking off from La Guardia at noon, and touching down at Los Angeles at noon. The newspaper and feature-writers really ate that one up. Lansing on the covers of *Life*, *Time*, *Newsweek*—the hottest of all hot pilots, and he was the first to admit it!

It was something you laughed about when you read it in the papers, and even admired the man's undoubted talent for publicity; but when Lansing was suddenly assigned to Project Nine, five weeks ago, it was no longer funny to Matt Riorden. The three-man

of Luna

IT MAY BE THAT SPACE FLIGHT
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The deceleration was sudden, a relentless braking effect that threw the men across the laboratory.

crew of the R-9 had to click—but Lansing and Riorden hadn't clicked, because Lansing thought he ought to be in charge, and that was bad.

There was the night in the officers' club when Matt had grown tired of listening to him talk, and talk—and talk—and couldn't listen any more. And he had said: "I'm sure you're the greatest thing since the Wright Brothers, but I've heard it all a hundred times, and so will you please break it off?"

There had been a silence then, and Matt waited while Lansing slowly set his glass down on the bar, a slightly amazed expression on his face. Lansing had said, smiling and teetering on the balls of his feet: "Maybe you'd like to try shutting me up, Major?"

The General had come into the bar just then, and that was the end of it; but the hostility was there, and it

didn't get any better. Matt had considered going to the General and putting it up to him—either he, Riorden, or Lansing, check out of Project Nine. But America's hottest pilot had been assigned over General Gaylor's head—on orders cut in Washington—and if anyone checked out, it wouldn't be Lansing. And that Matt Riorden didn't want. *Although, he had told himself, just why I want any part of this clambake is something for a mind mechanic to answer. I must have holes in my head.*

JESSUP was saying: "He has a point, of course. In a deal like this, the one in command is the one who generally gets the publicity. If we pull through—and even if we don't—you'll make the headlines—not me or Lansing. We'll be listed as 'also present.' Lansing is smart enough to know that."

Matt hadn't thought of that angle before. It made sense; it explained Lansing's bitterness. "What am I supposed to do about it?" he asked.

"Nothing, I suppose," the physicist answered seriously. "I don't care how you two feel about each other, except as it affects my safety. I just want to be sure we all know who's in charge of this junket."

"I'm in command," Matt said softly. "And don't worry; we'll have enough to think about without leaping at each other's throats." He glanced at the chronometer on his wrist. "We'd better go."

When they came into the big room at the rear of Headquarters Building, a five-star general was speaking. Two dozen high-ranking brass listened attentively, and three or four civilians whom Matt recognized from their newspaper pictures. A couple of en-

listed photographers bustled about, setting up the newsreel cameras and sound equipment.

The General spoke in a relaxed, almost conversational tone, but no one had any doubt of his seriousness. "The newsreel pictures will not be released until some future date—perhaps a month from now, perhaps a year. And I should like to remind you that Project Nine is absolutely top secret. If I were at liberty to tell you the strategy behind this effort, and the full implications of what it can mean in a military sense, I'm sure you would all be impressed. But take my word for it—it's of the first importance." Here the General paused. He seemed to look at each man directly, and his voice took on a new and rather unpleasant tone. "There is no person here, military or civilian, big enough to violate this security and get away with it. Keep that in mind, gentlemen."

Matt could feel the prickling at the back of his neck. It seemed as if his guilt must be apparent to everyone in the room. For he had violated the security of Project Nine when, two weeks ago, on his last trip to Denver, he had told Louise. It had not been done lightly. Torn between conflicting loyalties, he had debated it for weeks; but in the end he had told her. If his luck ran out, he felt, he wanted her to have, as some small compensation, the understanding of why and how he had died.

AWARE of growing nervousness, he moved restlessly around the room, not wanting to talk to anyone, wishing this part were over. He noticed Lansing, standing before the wall chart of the earth-moon orbit and talking to the Secretary. The pilot was twenty-five or so, of middle height, but lean and graceful, and with the kind of sudden smile and handsome, high-cheeked features that were the photographers' delight. Matt moved closer and listened, curious.

"The R-9 will throw out what we call a 'filler mass'—a combination of hydrogen and liquid ozone, and another fuel that doesn't even have a name yet."

"Now, this fuel—" the Secretary began.

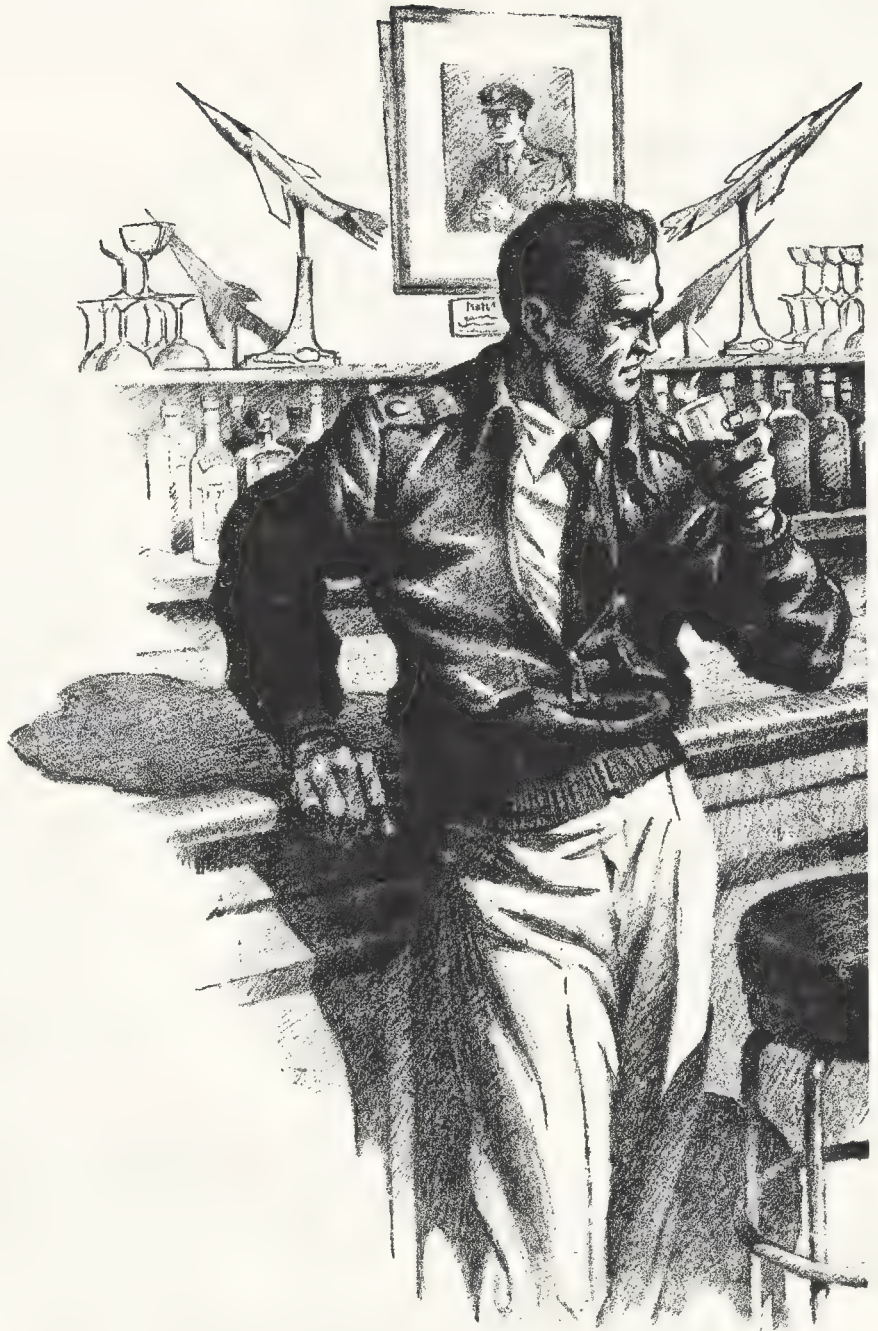
"Is what really gives us the push," Lansing interrupted smoothly, "to reach escape velocity—if we do."

"And if not?"

Lansing smiled gently. "We fall back, of course."

The Secretary looked properly impressed. *Lansing has what it takes*, Matt thought as he turned away. It wasn't difficult to imagine him in Hollywood.

General Gaylor came up. "How do you feel, boy?"



Lansing had said, smiling and teetering on the balls of his

"Hello, Sam. A little edgy. I'd just as soon get started."

"Sure," the General said. He was a great hulking bear of a man who wore his two stars without arrogance, and Matt had a deep affection for him. "This is for the birds, but we have to sweat it out. Come over—the Senator wants to meet you."

Matt recognized the shock of white hair and black string tie so familiar to anyone who read the newspapers. The Senator was proud and happy to shake the hand of Major Riorden, and launched into a brief but impassioned oratory, most of which had to do with the undoubted fact that history would be made this day.

Major Riorden held the opinion that the makers of history too often

died in the process, but he didn't say so. Then the cameras were ready, and there was a full half-hour of posing and speech-making. The five-star General made a speech. The Senator made a speech, much the same as he had just delivered to Matt, but at greater length. Finally Matt found himself squinting into the lights and mumbling something inane; and then the group broke up and went outside to the waiting staff cars.

Two hundred yards from the launching site the blockhouse squatted on the plateau, a mass of concrete, with a pyramidal roof, and walls ten feet thick. Here the staff cars halted, discharged their occupants and sped back to the post.

*Illustrated by
Brendan Lynch*



feet: "Maybe you'd like to try shutting me up, Major?"

There was a short delay, and Matt waited with Jessup and Lansing, feeling the sun hot on his shoulders and beginning to sweat a little. At this distance, he reflected, the *R-9* reminded you of an insect—a strange, gigantic insect lying on a concrete slab—with its thin, stubby, swept-back wings, and the fuel hoses running out of its belly like some enormous feeding apparatus.

Then he was walking over the uneven ground, listening with one ear to General Gaylor making conversation, and thinking that now, at close range, the *R-9* was no longer an insect but a bullet. A special, king-size bullet—long and slim and needle-nosed, with alternate black and silver stripes running the length of its long axis.

They crossed the network of shadows cast by the launching cradle and came up on the concrete slab. Matt let his hand brush the side of the rocket, briefly, as if to assure himself that it was real, feeling the smooth aluminum-beryllium hull hot to the touch. It seemed incredible that this mass of metal could ever lift itself into the air.

They waited a moment near the nose of the rocket while someone inside opened the air-lock. Matt felt a sudden chill as they entered the pilots' compartment; the air-conditioning was already working.

Three or four technicians hurried about making last-minute adjustments. General Gaylor and the three men in green gabardine stood by, un-

comfortably. No one had anything to say. The cabin measured some ten by sixteen, and it was no place for anyone who needed a lot of room. The two instrument panels fitted snugly into the space where the nose narrowed almost to a point. Instead of a wind-screen, a double row of quartz portholes ran around three sides of the cabin. The walls, floor and ceiling were painted gray-green and yellow—psychologically soothing colors, Matt had been told.

A technician reported to General Gaylor that everything was ready. The General thanked him but continued to stand uneasily, saying nothing. Matt wondered what he was waiting for, and then realized that the General hesitated to give a direct order to strap down.

Matt looked at him and said: "Okay, sir." The two acceleration couches stood on the floor in front of the instrument panels. Matt stretched out prone on the left-hand one. The General bent and fastened the wide elastic straps, covering him from neck to ankles, but leaving his arms free. A technician strapped Lansing down. Jessup left the cabin and went aft—his couch was in the galley.

Feeling the firm pressure of the General's hand on his shoulder, Matt thought that this too was the time for a resounding phrase. The General mumbled something he didn't catch and straightened up, and then he and the technicians left the cabin. Matt heard the air-lock sigh closed, and they were alone.

It would be several minutes before blast-off. He lifted his head, leaning on his elbows.

In front of him, a little above eye-level, the panel was a marvel of simplicity. A half-dozen dials and gauges, no more; and the most important were the speed and air-pressure indicators. Below them was the "console"—the bank of buttons that fired the main rockets.

The right-hand panel looked more familiar, being merely a group of flight instruments—artificial horizon, directional gyro, air speed and so on—and an ordinary airplane control wheel. A winged rocket, the *R-9* would depend on its wings to descend through the atmosphere on the return trip, coming down in a long, flat glide until very close to the earth; then standing on its tail and blasting under reduced power until it touched down.

From the next couch Lansing said: "Here we are, boss-man—a couple of pigs bound for the slaughter."

"Yeah," Matt said. The man's flippancy annoyed him, but he was glad that someone was close by; and it occurred to him that it must be bad for Jessup, alone in the rear. He put on

the earphones and pressed the inter-com switch. "Ralph?"

"Yes." Jessup's voice sounded a little tight.

"Strapped down all right?"

"Uh-huh. How much longer?"

"You got me. . . . Here we go!" The R-9 began to tip as the big crane slowly lifted it up to the vertical. Matt felt the slight jar as the rocket settled down over the launching pit, balanced on its tail-fins.

He pressed another button and got the blockhouse. "General Gaylor? Over."

"Hello." The General's voice boomed in the earphones. "How is it?"

The question struck Matt as unanswerable. "When do we blast off?"

"Be a few minutes." A pause; then: "I'm going to cut you off, Matt. Be sure to remove the earphones."

"Yeah. Be seeing you, Sam."

"Sure you will, boy." Again a pause. "Soon as you can, contact me."

"Roger."

"God bless you, boy." A click, then silence.

HE took off the earphones. He was committed. Through the porthole ahead of him he could see a small white cloud in the sky; and somehow, it seemed important that he watch it. A jumble of thoughts raced through his mind, each so swift and fragmentary that he couldn't hold on to any one of them: Duntzer, the rocket expert, frowning myopically behind his thick glasses and droning: ". . . out of sight in von minute; out of the atmosphere in three. You will reach *Brennschluss* in five hundred seconds." The polite young engineer from Cal Tech: ". . . you will be traveling in a shallow, elliptical orbit, the apogee of which . . ." And Louise, her hair like a soft halo about her head, and the shocked, incredulous look in her eyes, saying: "The moon?"

The seconds dripped away. He seemed to be in two places at once: here, strapped to this couch; and also outside, seeing the projectile pointed into the sky, the launching cradle like a spidery scaffolding around it; and spotted here and there at safe distances the radar and cameras, rearing up to follow the streaking flame of the exhaust. Here, staring at the small white cloud and waiting; and also in the blockhouse, seeing the General now at the panel, a bemused expression on his face as he lifts his hand and lets it fall heavily, slowly, on the switch. An electric impulse runs along a wire; the atom engine, small, compact; valves jump open; fuel heats, expands, fights for release—

Blast-off!

The sound began as a faint hum, far away, and then it became a roar,

going through all the registers from low to high. It grew until it was the frenzied scream and screech of a thousand air-hammers; it grew until it was a solid thing, unbelievable; a drill boring into your skull, and you shook your head to get free of it, as from a vise. And beneath and around the sound was something worse—the dark, subsonic vibrations, not heard but felt, that carried with them a kind of nameless terror.

The cloud moved.

He began to feel the acceleration. It was a hand pushing his head into his shoulders, inexorably, with increasing pressure; it washed over him like a wave. The flesh of his cheeks moved, and his mouth dragged open, and he was scarcely aware that the incredible sound had faded and died away.

Seventy seconds after blast-off the rocket tilted to a forty-five degree angle, pointing east. Matt expected it, but he couldn't fight it. The sudden, grinding increase in weight mashed him into the soft rubber of the couch. His eyes glazed over as the blood-supply failed, and he blacked out.

When he came to, the pressure of the 4-g acceleration was still there, and the dark subsonic vibrations; he knew the rocket motors still blasted. From take-off to *Brennschluss*—that moment when the motors would cut off—was the crucial time, and he could do nothing but hope, and the eight minutes seemed no longer than eternity. Then *Brennschluss*, and the shock of the first stage of deceleration. Blood rushed to his head, as if he were hanging upside down. The second stage followed quickly; the vibrations stopped, and there was no pressure, no drag. The R-9 coasted in free flight.

His body felt as if it had been pounded with a rubber hose, and he wanted nothing more than to lie there for the rest of his days. But he raised his head, opened his eyes. He saw four dials, two portholes. This, he knew, was *diplopia*—double vision. He had been told it might happen. He felt giddy and light-headed, vaguely aware of Lansing moving on the next couch.

He reached around and unbuckled the straps, wanting to get up and look at the speed indicator. But the sickness came, and this too he had expected. He reached for the can fastened by spring clips to the floor by the couch, a can with a snail cover, like an old-fashioned beer mug. He made it just in time, bringing the can to his mouth before the vomiting began. He filled the can; and when there was no more to come up, he retched dryly, in shuddering, convulsive spasms.

For a time he lay exhausted, but presently he found the strength to lift

his head again. The double vision was gone, but everything swam slightly, as if he were seeing through water.

He looked at the speed indicator. The numbers on the dial danced and blurred, but he could make out the needle at the three-o'clock position. Just short of seven miles per second—twenty-five thousand miles per hour. It seemed fantastic: no sound, no sensation of movement, a suspension in time and space like nothing he had ever known. He raised his eyes to the porthole. The sky was black, with the deep blackness of soot. What stars he could see shone brightly and unwinking.

Suddenly the full awareness hit him. He was in a space ship, and for the first time, men had escaped the earth! He felt like shouting—or weeping.

He swung his legs over the side of the cot and stood up. The pressure of his feet against the floor sent him floating to the ceiling, and he put up his hands just in time. He pushed and came down.

This was weightlessness, he thought, holding onto the couch; and somehow it wasn't as incredible as he had expected. He stood up again, slowly, and reached for one of the nylon loops that hung all over the cabin like straps in a subway. He pulled, experimentally, and floated over to a port.

He saw the earth. Below him and to the rear it hung like an enormous toy balloon in the black sky, very bright, with darker areas; and it didn't make any sense. There came to his mind a childhood memory—the trouble he'd had believing the earth was round and that people like the Chinese could live on the other side and not fall off. It was almost as hard, now, to look at that smooth round ball hanging in space and believe it was the earth. But there it was, and they were moving away from it, beginning the long drift to Luna.

LANSING was on the inter-com. "No answer from Jessup."

"We'd better take a look," Matt said. He faced the door at the rear and pushed off with his feet. He floated across the cabin and missed the door by five feet, banging lightly against the end wall.

"You're a rotten space-jockey," Lansing said, drifting past him and out the door. Matt followed, pulling himself along by the loops.

The galley and storeroom was on the right, crammed with equipment. The physicist still lay on the couch in the middle of the floor, and his long, thin frame hadn't stood the acceleration too well. Blood ran from his nose, and his face was green. His stomach, evidently, had rebelled before he could reach for the can; the place was a mess. Matt could have

felt sorrier for him if he didn't feel so bad himself. His eyes were still slightly out of focus, and his organs seemed to be doing slow rolls inside him.

Ten minutes later Jessup was able to move about, and they went across the passage to the laboratory on the other side of the ship. This was Jessup's domain—lined from floor to ceiling with intricate-looking instruments and machines, about most of which Matt knew nothing.

He eased into the chair bolted to the floor in front of the short-wave radio, and buckled the strap across his knees to hold him down. He switched on the radio, thinking that the General must be biting his nails, waiting for the word. His watch told him it was nearly a half-hour since blast-off.

He picked up the hand-mike. "R-9 calling Project Nine. Over." He waited, watching the loud-speaker above his head.

"Hello, R-9. Can you read me?"

Matt turned the volume to full. "Hello, Sam. I'm reading you faint but clear."

THE General's voice dropped an octave in relief. "Matt! How are you, boy? Are you all right? Jessup? Lansing?"

Matt could hear a buzz of excited talk in the background, whistles, cheers. A big day for the Army, he thought.

"We're okay, Sam. A little rocky. Everything floats, if you don't nail it down. Including my stomach."

"Matt, I don't know what to say," the General said, and there was genuine emotion in his voice. "You took off like a bat out of hell—"

"Yeah." Funny; there didn't seem to be anything really important to say. "What's with you, General?"

The General's voice seemed to be fading, but the words still came clear: "There's been a leak, boy. The story broke in the Post a few minutes ago."

Matt felt a chill run through him. "You mean about Project Nine?"

"Project Nine and the R-9 and where it was going and the names of the crew. Somebody talked. We stopped it as soon as we could, but the word is out."

"Got an ideas?" (O Lord, he thought, don't let it be Louise!)

"No, but it won't take long to trace." General Gaylor's voice took on a gravel edge. "And when I find out who talked, I'll throw the book at him—" He went on speaking, but his voice faded away. For a minute the loudspeaker crackled; then, abruptly, silence.

"Hello, Project Nine," Matt called. "I can't read you." But the set seemed to be dead, and he sat there holding the hand-mike, feeling a nerve beginning to jump in his cheek.



And the shocked look in Louise's eyes, as she said, "The moon?"

He turned to Jessup. "What's wrong with this?"

"Don't know," Jessup said. "I'll have a look at it."

Matt noticed Lansing clinging to a loop, a curious, almost frightened expression on his face. "What's the matter with you?" Matt said.

Lansing swallowed. "I don't feel so hot. My stomach is up in my throat."

"Same here." Matt turned to Jessup. "Ralph, work on this. We're supposed to be in contact every foot of the way. Call me when you fix it."

His throat was dry, and he floated across the passage to the galley. But getting a drink wasn't quite as simple as on earth. Straps had been placed at every likely spot, and Matt clipped two of them to the rings in his belt. From a rack he took a can with a spring cover and filled it from the pressure-fed water tank. He inserted a straw into a small hole in the top of the can, and thus he drank.

A couple of swallows were almost too much, and the thought of solid food made his stomach churn like a cement mixer. He opened the cover of the can and shook it. A little water sloshed out and floated in the air, a lump. He shook the can again, harder, and the water broke into small globules, hanging like mist. Interesting—but his mind wasn't on it.

Louise . . . The thought was like a small, insistent hammer in his head. He couldn't believe she had talked. But who else?

It was, he supposed, inevitable. Alone for two weeks, the knowledge of what he was going to attempt like a weight inside of her, and the need to tell someone intolerable. So she'd told someone—Hal and Martha Goodwin, maybe, their best friends. You could visualize the pattern: Louise pledging them to secrecy; but it was too big to keep, and then the Goodwins letting someone else in on the tremen-

dous news—absolutely confidential, of course—and the juicy tidbit was on its way, one thing leading to another, until it ended up in the *Post*.

He replaced the can in the rack and pulled himself back into the lab, thinking that he couldn't, in all honesty, really blame her. The need to confide was the same that had brought him to the point where he could, against security orders, tell Louise.

Working on the radio, Jessup hadn't bothered to clip his rings to a strap, and his feet floated in the air above his head, like a diver arrested in mid-fall. It was mildly amusing, and Matt reflected that man was unquestionably an adaptable animal; he could get used to anything.

"Any luck?" he asked.

Jessup snorted, a baffled expression on his face. "Dead as the proverbial dodo. Transmitter and receiver." He pulled himself to a normal position. "Might be the sun." He handed Matt a dark filter. "Take a look."

Matt wedged himself between the two big automatic cameras in front of the port and lifted the filter to his eyes. He looked into the face of the sun, but it was not the sun he had ever seen before. The same apparent size; but now, with no atmosphere to distort, it was strange, somehow terrifying. Near the center he saw what Jessup meant—a great sun spot, darker than the rest, a swirl of erupting gases that looked like iron filings around a magnet. As he watched, a scarlet filament leaped out from the center and flared a million miles into dark space.

"What they call a 'solar flare,'" Jessup explained. "Blocks out short-wave transmission just as you snuff out a candle. It's completely screwed up the telemetering instruments."

Matt nodded absently and put down the filter. His preoccupation must have shown in his face, for Jessup said: "What's wrong? Something I don't know about? The jets?"

"No," Matt said. "We're doing fine so far." Suddenly he had to get it off his chest; and because he trusted Jessup, he told him about Louise, and the security violation.

WHEN he finished, Jessup said: "It was the natural thing to do, seems to me. I'd have done the same if I had a wife." He frowned and rapped the radio chassis with his knuckles. "What does Gaylor expect you to do—tell your wife nothing and walk away, as if you were a salesman on a three-day trip to Buffalo?"

Matt smiled without humor. "That's the Army, Ralph." It was nearly three months ago, but he remembered clearly the day General Gaylor had assembled the entire personnel in the mess hall. The General stood there,

his shoulders hunched a little, as if he were going to plunge off tackle, and exploded the bombshell.

"You're all new here," he said abruptly, "and wondering what goes on. I'll tell you. At this post we're going to study cosmic rays."

A lot of eyebrows, Matt recalled, went up at that.

"That's for the public," the General continued. "Now I'll tell you what you're really here for. During the last two years, from another base, the Army has fired eight unmanned rockets at the moon. Five of them hit the target. Very soon, we're going to launch the ninth rocket. This will be somewhat different than the others,"—he paused—"because there will be men aboard."

There had been, surprisingly, no outburst from the men assembled, but rather a kind of collective sigh. General Gaylor waited until it was quiet again. "This will be known as Project Nine, the first attempt to send a manned rocket to the moon—around the moon, actually—and return. You can consider Project Nine as strict a secret as the A-bomb was."

"To the public, then, we're working on cosmic rays. Anybody asks you what you do, tell them you blow up the high-altitude balloons." Smiles, snickers, at that.

"Of the real business, tell no one. No one. Before you leave here, you will read and sign Section V of the Security Order. And let me spell it out so all of you will understand—if anyone is so foolish as to talk about it, at any place, any time, he'll find himself in more trouble than he ever imagined. That applies to officers, enlisted men, civilians."

It had been very impressive. *But not impressive enough*, Matt thought; and now *I'm in trouble. But good.*

"Well, no point in stewing about it," Jessup said practically. "At least until we make contact again." He turned back to the radio.

Feeling somewhat better, Matt floated out of the lab and up to the cabin. The acceleration couches were so constructed as to fold in the middle and become high-backed chairs, and Lansing now sat in one, his feet on the instrument panel, completely at ease. Matt fixed his couch to become a seat and pulled a strap across his knees. He glanced at the panel. Air-pressure steady; speed indicator back just a hair from the three-o'clock position.

"The radar and viewing screen are kaput," Lansing said conversationally.

Matt's eyes jumped to the screen above the panel. "Are you sure?"

"Yes, indeed, boss-man," Lansing said cheerfully. "Same old devil that got the radio, I reckon."

"Oh, fine," Matt said disgustedly. That meant no radar shield. The

chances of a meteor hitting the *R-9*, he had been assured, were one in perhaps a half-million, but the feeling of being completely without protection wasn't pleasant. He turned to Lansing. "You seem pretty happy about it."

Lansing said softly, as if to himself: "Security Order, Section V. And you once told me, Major, that I talked too much."

"What?" Matt said, uncomprehendingly.

"You told your wife," Lansing said. "You spilled the beans about Project Nine." He added in mock seriousness: "That was unwise of you, Riorden."

Matt was dumbfounded. "How—"

Lansing pointed to the inter-com. The switch was open. "Even the walls have ears," he intoned. "I happened to hear you confessing to Jessup."

Oh, brother, Matt thought, *this really tears it*. Lansing, he saw, was positively gleeful.

THERE was no point in denying it. "All right, you know. So what?"

"General Gaylor—your pal Sam—will no doubt be very interested."

Matt still didn't get it. "What do you expect to get out of blabbing—a citation?"

Lansing looked like a man who has just found a bundle of million-dollar bills. "It occurs to me that when the General hears about it, he may want to put me in command."

Matt stared at him in amazement. He'd vastly underestimated the man. "You'd really do it, too, wouldn't you?"

"You bet," Lansing said, and now there was no humor in his tone.

"I've heard about characters like you," Matt said thoughtfully. "Until now, I never met one in the flesh. You know, Lansing, you're a real jerk."

Lansing's eyes flickered. "When we get back to solid ground, suppose we see who's a jerk. You talked big that night in the officers' club. Just for fun, we'll see how tough you are."

"When I fight," Matt said, "it's not for fun." He felt a cold contempt for the man. "Too bad the radio isn't working," he said wearily.

"You've given me an incentive to fix it," Lansing said, rising. "I can't wait to see how your pal Sam takes the news."

Matt sat there a few minutes, and Lansing's words hung like echoes in the silence. *So the fly-boy will sing his head off*, he thought. It wouldn't, of course, make much difference. Even now, Gaylor's men would be checking, following the leak to its source, like plumbers. And the source was Matt Riorden.

As to what would happen then, he didn't know. It wouldn't be good.

Even the major's leaves wouldn't help—Project Nine was too big, too important. Nine years in the service, he mused wryly. What do they do in a case like this—dishonorable discharge, with a few years in Leavenworth to cool off?

He floated over to a porthole, and the butterflies in his stomach were not all the result of weightlessness. Take Ralph's advice, he tried to tell himself, and forget it. They sure as hell can't come after me. They can't lower the boom until I get back—if I do get back. For the fear was there: the fear of space, and the unknown, and the realization that Project Nine was, at best, an experiment, a gamble.

BUT, if work was the antidote for fear, Matt found it no easy solution. He checked what equipment he could—the air-conditioning and temperature installations—but that took only a few hours. The atom motor and the jets were in the rear, sealed by the thick lead baffle that protected them from radiation, and there was nothing he could do about them if he wanted to.

That evening he remembered the logbook, and sat in the acceleration chair, the book across his knees. In it he was supposed to record such pertinent thoughts and impressions as might come to the mind of a man finding himself free of the earth and its attractions. "There'll be a lot of things we want to know about that won't show up on Jessup's instruments," General Gaylor had said. "Write down anything you think of."

We have been in free flight for twelve hours. Radio and radar have cut out. Jessup thinks it may be due to sun spots. We have no way of telling how far we are from earth.

He twisted in his seat. Outside the port the earth was a bright ball, luminous and faintly blue, against a black velvet curtain.

The outlines of the contents are visible as dark areas against a lighter gray. Here in the cabin

He paused. What could you say about a place where there was no night or day, no up or down or sideways? What could you say about the uneasiness, the vague apprehensions, that filled the silence around him? He held his pencil in the air, removed his hand. The pencil remained floating. Matt blew gently; the pencil drifted away and he picked it out of the air.

"Writing your confession?" Lansing had come into the cabin.

"You're a laugh a minute," Matt said. Apparently the fly-boy hadn't been able to fix the radio; that, at least, was a minor pleasure to be en-



"What the hell," Matt said inanely. "It's going right through—"

joyed. "Too bad the radio is out—you might be in command by now."

"I haven't given up on it yet," Lansing retorted.

"You'll be a big man when you get back," Matt said. "I understand you have designs on the movies."

"Why not? You can bet I won't sit around on a major's pay for the rest of my life."

"All this trip means to you," Matt said, "is a chance to cash in, eh?" He considered telling Lansing the real significance of the moon attempt, as he had heard it from General Gaylor. To hell with it, he thought; I've talked too much already. Anyway, it would probably impress Lansing not at all. He was, in a way, curiously childlike—able to understand only those things that concerned him directly.

"You don't think I'd stick my neck out like this for the thrill, do you? I'm here for one reason—cold cash. And I'll do all right, too. There's only one thing I'd like to change—"

Lansing put his feet on the panel and studied the ceiling. "I wish the order called for a landing on the moon."

"What?"

"Sure," Lansing asserted seriously. "That would be something." He clicked his tongue against the roof of his mouth. "The way I see it, we'll do all right on this trip, but the crew that actually touches down on the moon will really be in solid."

Matt expelled a long breath. "I was mistaken about you. I knew you were an opportunist and a publicity hound. But I didn't know you were a fool."

He left the cabin, disturbed more than he cared to admit. A certain amount of conceit and ambition was, he supposed, good in a man—but Lansing was all wrong for a deal like this. How, he wondered, had Lansing ever passed his psycho check?

About midnight his stomach began to settle down and he prepared a meal in the galley. The food was pre-

cooked, and he had only to heat it, but even the simplest task was complicated by weightlessness. He had to put the food in covered pans and clip the pans to the electric grill; and when it was ready he could eat only a few mouthfuls.

Weightlessness, he wrote in the log, is something like the sensation of falling.

That wasn't exactly true, he reflected, although it was the first thing that came to your mind. Falling, you still felt a gravity pull. Here, you simply floated; and your guts floated, as if they had been cut loose from your body.

But sleeping, he found, was a pleasure. Lying on the couch, with the straps holding you loosely and no pressure on any part of your body, was better than floating in salt water. . . .

The next morning he awoke with a sudden start, hearing a rapid whirring, like a rattlesnake. He opened his eyes to see Lansing near the ceiling, drifting in strange acrobatics—loops and dives and rolls. Matt sat up and looked around. The whirring came from a small hand movie camera fastened to the end wall.

Matt almost laughed. Lansing, in another situation, would have been funny. He had evidently smuggled the camera aboard and was now recording for posterity: Lansing on a lecture platform, complete with movies of the Great Adventure.

"You're wasting your time," Matt told him. "I'll have that camera impounded as soon as we land."

Lansing dived across the cabin and snapped the switch. The whirring stopped. "Sure you will," he said agreeably. "But I'll get it back, sooner or later. And speaking of being impounded, what do you think will happen to you?"

So the second day began, and the long waiting. Matt checked the *R-9's* position, a complicated and tedious job, but it killed the morning. He found their heading to be amazingly accurate—one-half degree off course—and his respect for the polite young engineer from Cal Tech went up considerably. The half degree would be adjusted later, when they approached the moon.

Boredom, he wrote somewhat facetiously, will perhaps become the major hazard of space travel.

Jessup, in fact, was the only one with much of anything to do. Matt spent some of his time in the laboratory, but the array of apparatus—the counters, meters, internal recorders—were largely incomprehensible to him, and he could do little more than watch the machines deliver their in-

formation. The solar flare had passed but the radio was still dead, and Jessup had finally quit work on it, as had Lansing.

For long hours Matt sat in front of the panel, watching the needle of the speed indicator unwind—the only evidence that they were moving at all. He began to feel that they had a chance. Except for the communications breakdown, everything was going according to plan: the facts and figures and theories he'd studied for nine weeks in the classroom were working out. Worry was still there, but not the heart-clutching fear he'd had before take-off, so strong that he hadn't dared admit it to himself. Fear, he reflected, is something you can't remain sensitive to indefinitely—you get used to it.

On the afternoon of the third day they passed the zero gravity line—that point in space, some 215,000 miles from take-off, where the pulls of the earth and moon are equal. Slow as the hour hand of a clock the speed needle had dropped back around the dial until they were coasting at less than two hundred miles an hour; and then, gradually, it began to move up again. They were falling toward the moon.

So the final connection to earth had been cut, Matt thought. Now the moon was the important thing. Brilliantly illuminated by the sun, it grew steadily larger outside the port. They would reach it in another twelve or fourteen hours.

It was time to re-position the ship, to give the cameras the fullest possible range. Matt pressed a button on the console. A low hum filled the cabin as the big gyro amidships began to revolve; the hum grew to a high, steady whine. He moved a lever and, in accordance with Newton's Third Law, the *R-9* turned ninety degrees. It still held the same heading, but now coasted broadside to the moon.

He slept and woke and managed to eat food in small quantities. It was that night that he first noticed his face and hands. They were turning a delicate brown, faint but unmistakable. He asked Jessup about it.

"Might be an excess of ultra-violet rays," the physicist said. He, too, was darkening; but his coloring, because of his light complexion, was more reddish than brown.

"Well, what does that mean?" Matt asked. "Good or bad?"

"Lansing just asked me the same question," Jessup replied. "Don't know yet. Working on it now. Protons, mesons, neutrons—they're pretty well screened out by our atmosphere. Here, we're apparently running into them." He turned away, watched a machine deliver cryptic strokes and symbols on a roll of perforated paper.

The hours crawled by. Matt sat at the console and watched what Kepler had called "the shining island of Levinia" bulk steadily, larger in the porthole. The flight plan called for two full circles around the moon, and then the *R-9* would blast away and head for earth. There were graphite vanes in the main exhausts to turn the rocket, but the smaller positioning jets at port and starboard were all that would be needed now. Without radar, the approach would have to be made by eye alone; and with the *R-9* moving at better than five thousand miles an hour, only a slight error could send the ship crashing silently into the airless surface of the moon.

Down through the ages, in every land, men have gazed at the moon and sighed in awe and wonder. They looked, but they could not touch; they wondered, but they could not know; and so they built myths and legends ascribing to it mysterious powers.

And Matt Riorden sat at the console of the *R-9* and looked at the moon, close now; and he felt a chill at his back, and something inside him, rooted deep in his heritage on earth, desired to turn away.

For this was no "shining island," this tormented land. He looked into the face of Luna and it was dreary beyond belief. It seemed to him a cold hell, a land forsaken—a scene of some vast and horrible carnage that at one instant had stopped while in eruption and was now sealed forever in its desolation. Long ago the Italian astronomer, Riccioli, had given names to the features of the moon, and the names were romantic—Sea of Clouds, Sleepy Marsh, Ocean of Storms. Never, Matt thought, had anything been so misnamed.

He pressed the button that activated the starboard jets. The rockets blasted and the *R-9* swung into its orbit. He sat tensely, ready to slam down on the buttons and blast away should they come too close. With no atmosphere to blur and soften, the surface stood out sharp and clear. It seemed uncomfortably close, but Matt estimated they were ten or twelve miles away.

Occasionally he glanced at the chart on the panel. This was the side of the moon always seen from earth, and with the aid of the chart he could pick out the familiar features. He saw Tycho, the most conspicuous crater, with the rills fanning out from its center like spokes from a wheel. He saw the Leibnitz Mountains, as high as any on earth, and the Great Wall. Copernicus, the chart said, was the most beautiful, and Matt wondered whose eyes could find beauty in that stark and lifeless crater.

The ship coasted now in full circle and they came around to the other

side of the moon, that no man had ever seen. It was more of the same—a tortured land of long-ago convulsions, pitted and scarred, brooding in a murky half-light.

On the second orbit Lansing relieved him at the controls, and he went back to the laboratory. There the cameras whirled continuously. Jessup stood between them, his face sunburned and somber. Looking out, Matt felt an overpowering sense of desolation. It was for this, he thought, that hundreds of men had worked, and millions of dollars had been spent. For this he had risked his life. It seemed stupid; he said to Jessup, "There it is. Think it was worth it?"

"No," Jessup said quietly. "No, Matt, I don't think it was worth the price."

Something in the tone of his voice made Matt turn. The physicist had his sleeves rolled up, and Matt saw that his wrists and arms were the same red-brown as his face. Matt stared, then rolled up his own sleeve. His arm was tanned. He unzipped the front of his coveralls, unbuttoned the underwear. His chest was tanned.

"What the hell," he said inanely. "It's going right through—"

Jessup's face was impassive. "Why not? Clothes aren't much protection. They'll stop alpha and beta rays, that's about all."

Jessup's casual acceptance of the fact did not, somehow, reassure him. Matt said: "You expected this?"

"Expect it? I didn't expect anything. That's the purpose of this trip—to find out what goes on up here."

"Well, dammit, do you think it's serious?" Matt persisted.

Jessup shrugged. "Depends on how long we take it, perhaps." His tone was slightly irritable. "I'm collecting data, not analyzing."

MATT turned back to the port. Looking up, he saw a patch of bright green near the edge of a crater and, a few miles away, another. These, he knew, were the places where the unmanned rockets had crashed. The rockets had carried a load of tetryl, a powerful explosive, and several pounds of green dye; the tetryl had exploded on contact and scattered the dye over an area large enough to be seen through telescopes from earth.

They were passing over the crater Aristarchus, the brightest spot on the moon, when it happened. He heard the high whine of the gyro, felt the drag on his body as the ship began to turn, swinging around 180 degrees until it coasted tail-first.

"What's the matter with that character?" Jessup said crossly. "He's spoiled the camera angle."

Cursing, Matt reached for the hand mike. Before his hand touched it,

the main jets blasted. Because the ship was moving tail-first, the deceleration was sudden, a relentless braking effect that threw the two men forward across the laboratory, pinning them against the wall. The ship began to tilt, slowly, until its tail pointed at the moon, the jets blasting at half power. Now the acceleration stopped, and Matt crawled across the wall to the inter-com, fear rising in his throat like a choking bubble.

"Lansing!" he yelled into the mike. "Lansing—what the hell are you doing?"

A click, then Lansing's voice, tense, excited—and exultant. "Hold your hat, Major. We're going down! We're going to land on the moon!"

Dear God, Matt Riorden thought; he's insane. I should have known he'd try something like this. "Lansing!" he yelled. "Hit those buttons! Blast off! I order—"

"Too good a chance to miss, Riorden. We're going to touch down! And I'm the guy that's going to do it!"

Matt dropped the mike and made for the door, seeing the crater close now, and Jessup lying on the floor where he had been flung when the jets blasted, blood running from his head. It was a nightmare journey up the passage to the cabin, and all he could think of was the ship settling down and touching the moon, knowing that anything could happen; knowing that if the ship touched down it would surely tip over on the uneven surface, and that would spell their doom. They'd never take off again.

He crawled into the cabin, fear and rage like knives inside him, and half-leaped, half-fell from the door to the instrument panel. Lansing, somehow, sensed his coming; he twisted around, rising against the strap across his knees. They collided and Lansing fell forward on the console, Matt on top of him, and they came down squarely on the bank of buttons activating the main jets.

All rockets blasted. The ship held a moment, quivering, straining against the suck of the moon, and then it roared up, the needle winding around the dial in a hurry as the acceleration increased, and the roar of the jets was a solid wave beating on their heads until it faded as they passed the speed of sound.

The acceleration flung Lansing back in his chair and Matt across the cabin against the end wall, and they remained so, helpless, unable to move. The grinding pressure was intensified by the ship's turning in a shallow curve—Lansing had hit a button positioning one of the graphite vanes in the exhaust—and Matt felt as if his body were spreading like dough against the wall. Through a gray film he saw Lansing straining to reach the

console, saw his face contort with the effort to move his arm. As the blackness fell over his eyes, Matt knew it was no good—Lansing was helpless, and the R-9 would blast under full power until the fuel tanks were empty.

Deceleration at *Brennschluss* was like ramming into a soft wall. They were again in free flight. Matt raised his head—and cried out! The moon loomed up dead ahead, a dark, foreboding mass filling the porthole, and he realized instantly what had happened—the curving flight of the R-9 had brought them in a wide circle, and they were falling into the moon!

There was one chance, but he could never reach the panel in time. "Lansing," he shouted. "The port jet!"

Lansing, groggy, leaned forward, almost falling out of his chair, and hit the button, kept his hand on it. Matt lay on the floor and felt the side jet blast weakly. For long seconds nothing happened, and the dark face of the moon seemed but an arm's-reach away; and then Matt felt the slight drag as the R-9 veered off, skimming less than a mile above the surface, heading out into space.

HE got to his feet, his body beaten and bruised, his legs shaky. There was murder in his eyes; and Lansing, turning, saw it there. He threw off the straps and sprang out of the chair. "I'm going to kill you," Matt said thickly.

Lansing's teeth showed very white in the half-light. His eyes were wild. "Kill me, then, or I'll kill you!"

It was a weird, fantastic battle, the strangest fight between two men since the world began. Lansing leaped, coming across the small cabin in a single dive. He crashed into Matt, but not hard, and they slammed into the side wall. Matt got his hands on Lansing's neck. He squeezed. Lansing's eyes bulged; his mouth fell open. He came up with his knee and caught Matt squarely in the groin. Matt grunted. Hot fire ran through his belly and he thought he was going to faint, but the hatred sustained him and he kept his grip on Lansing's neck.

They tumbled all over the cabin, two men in a kind of crazy slow-motion, crashing into the ceiling, the walls, the console. Lansing broke the hold on his neck and went at Matt with both hands and feet, clawing, kicking, his breath coming in hissing gasps. Matt broke away, floating below Lansing. He grabbed him by the feet, swung him in a sudden arc. Lansing, unprepared, smashed head-first against a wall. It was all over, then, but Matt didn't know it; he held Lansing by the collar with one hand and with the other he hammered the handsome face, his fist moving auto-



It was all over, but Matt didn't know it; he held Lansing with one hand and with the other he hammered the handsome face.

matically, until Jessup came into the cabin and pulled him away.

ON earth, people awoke, yawned, ate breakfast and went to work. Others, at the same time, yawned, brushed their teeth and went to bed. In the sovereign State of Colorado, U.S.A., a two-star general stalked out of the radio room, cursing. In Denver, Louise Riorden sat looking out of the kitchen window of her small apartment, waiting, wondering.

In the rocket ship *R-9*, some eighteen thousand miles from the moon, three men sat in the cabin and watched the needle of the speed indicator as if it were the most fascinating thing in the world.

Matt Riorden explored with his tongue the hole where a tooth used to

be, and his body ached with the tension in it. The needle stood at the ten-o'clock position, and shortly it would be at the nine, then eight. The *R-9* coasted in space against the pull of the moon and it was slowing up, steadily, inexorably. The fuel tanks were dry.

If the ship's momentum was enough to carry it past the zero-gravity line, the *R-9* would fall toward earth, and they would have a chance. Lacking enough momentum, the *R-9* would slow down, and come to a stop, and fall back to the moon.

What a way to die! Matt thought; and the bitter taste of despair filled his mouth. He looked at Lansing in the other chair. His eyes were purple blobs, almost closed, and his face was no longer anything you'd want to

photograph. *I ought to hate him.* Matt thought. But Lansing was unimportant now. The only thing was the needle—and time, like a solid wave that towered up and over a swimmer but never broke.

He hated the needle, the needle that might drop down to zero before it started to climb the dial. He rubbed his fingers across the stubble on his chin, and in doing so he noticed his hands. Quite brown now, a real Florida tan; and it was the same all over his body. Whether it was actually a tan or something else, and what caused it, was still a mystery; but it didn't matter now. Only the needle mattered. It seemed an eternity since the trouble at the moon. A half-hour ago Matt had blasted the port and starboard jets, and that had helped a little, shoving the needle up a few notches. But the side jets were weak, not designed for push, and the needle had dropped back and there was nothing more they could do.

THEY sat quietly, fear not too well concealed on their faces. Jessup, Matt noticed, seemed the calmest. The physicist stroked his nose and stared into space; his expression seemed abstracted, as if he were thinking of something else. He said now: "I'm going back to the lab."

Lansing turned and watched him leave the cabin. He said, moving his swollen lips with difficulty: "That bastard is cracking up. We sweat this out, and he wants to count ultra-violet rays or something."

It did seem strange, and presently Matt went back to the lab and said so to Jessup.

The physicist took his time about answering. "What's the difference whether I'm here or up front? Matt, I—" He hesitated, and it seemed to Matt that he was about to make a decision of some kind. "I mean, either we make it past the zero line, or we don't. Watching the needle won't help."

Maybe it's the professional attitude. Matt conceded, returning to his chair. But an hour later Jessup came back to the cabin and the three took up their vigil.

And now, to Matt, it seemed as if they couldn't win. The odds were too long. Too many obstacles, piling up one after the other—the take-off, the trouble at the moon, and now this. The needle pointed to their doom. He willed it to stop its descent before it dropped to zero; willed it with every ounce of his being. But it fell steadily down the dial.

He put his head in his hands, and he could think of nothing but the swift fall to the moon. They would crash at close to two miles a second, but outside the rocket there would be

no sound, and no one to see it. The pumice would spurt up, then settle again; and time, dark and silent, would flow on.

He lifted his head, and the needle was too close to zero. He stared numbly, watching it spell out death, and death was a thin black line against a white number on a dial. It took him a minute to realize that he had been looking at the needle for some time, and it hadn't moved. It was holding steady. He heard Lansing shout. Five minutes later they were sure—the needle was inching up the dial again. They were picking up speed, falling toward the earth.

Lansing wanted to ditch in the ocean. Jessup thought they ought to set down on land. If the ship sank, the physicist argued, the whole purpose of the trip would be wasted.

It was some eighty hours after crossing the zero line and the *R-9* coasted in a narrow curve, picking up speed constantly in its fall to earth. The planet loomed close—Matt estimated they were less than fifty thousand miles away.

"Look," Lansing said: "On water we have a chance. Not much, but better than bringing this crate in at a field. Do you have any idea how fast we'll be traveling when we touch down? And we don't have wheels, remember."

"I say come in at some airstrip," Jessup insisted stubbornly. "In water, we'll sink in five minutes." He waved his hand, indicating the apparatus in the laboratory. "What's the point of the whole attempt if we don't save the instruments?"

"To hell with the instruments!" Lansing said heatedly. "I'm interested in my neck."

It was up to Matt to decide. It seemed to him that Jessup was right—what profit the trip if there was nothing left, no information, no data? He said: "We'll come in at some air-base. Land or water, it won't make much difference. We're going to come in fast and hit hard, and our chances are damned slim. If we can, we'll land at Muroc. I know the lay-out there."

Lansing's face flushed under his tan. "Riorden, take my advice—"

"I wouldn't take your advice," Matt said, "on how to fly a kite." He left the lab. They had a couple of hours yet, and he slept for a while, then fixed himself a meal in the galley, eating mechanically, without tasting. When he came back to the cabin the earth was as big as a barn outside the port. The sun was setting behind it and the zodiacal light streamed out on each side; the planet seemed to be balanced on a shimmering axis.

Sitting at the panel, he went over the flight plan. If the engineers were

right, they would swing in three or four orbits around the earth, dipping into the atmosphere and out again on each orbit, carefully, gingerly, to avoid burning up like a meteor; and finally getting down into air dense enough to support the wings. On paper, it looked good.

He slumped in the acceleration chair, feeling oddly tired, even after the sleep, and at the same time he was aware of a kind of nervous tingling in his limbs. Not surprising, he thought; I'm probably getting ulcers.

He glanced at his hands, now the color of coffee. Jessup still had no explanation, and seemed evasive about talking about it. Matt wondered what they'd look like after, say, a month in space. How much of a sunburn can you take?

He reached for the logbook clipped to the panel and for a half-hour he wrote steadily, describing as best he could the darkening of their skins, the strange tingling in his body, his plan to bring the *R-9* in at Muroc.

He put the log aside, thinking that their chances of walking away from the landing were no better than fifty-fifty, maybe less. And even if he survived, he had the business of the security violation waiting for him. Either way, it wasn't much to look forward to.

So we went to the moon, he thought, and so what? The irony of it was almost funny—a sad commentary on the ability of the human species to make things tough for themselves. The *R-9* had done its job—but the human element had fouled them up. Lansing, and his adolescent eagerness to be a newspaper hero—Matt shrugged. He had no room for hatred now, and the fact of having given Lansing a deserved beating seemed small satisfaction. He had no room for anything but the enormous desire to get back to earth in one piece.

The clock on the panel read four A.M., when they came into the first orbit, two hundred miles above the earth. Matt sat in the right-hand chair, in front of the airplane control wheel, and below him he could see what appeared to be New Zealand, and then, shortly, Australia. Then over the Indian Ocean and swinging away from the earth, the *R-9* slowing against the gravity pull.

This was a bad time, and he felt the fear building up as they headed out into space, the *R-9* now—he hoped—in a closed ellipse. They went out perhaps forty thousand miles before the speed indicator registered zero and they began to fall back.

Matt breathed easier. He hadn't been sure, but now the ship was tied to earth, and they would, at least, get down.

Lansing, restless, prowled the cabin, looking like a bearded Indian. Jessup remained in the lab and once, when Matt looked in, he found the physicist writing furiously in a notebook, the open page a jumble of illegible notations, like a doctor's prescription.

"What's all this?" Matt said. He found it vaguely odd that Jessup could at this point, still bring himself to work.

Jessup closed the notebook. "Nothing you'd understand," he said, not unkindly. "Dope on this and that. How long before we get into the atmosphere and stay in?"

"Fifteen, eighteen hours, maybe," Matt replied. "I don't know, exactly. And I don't much care, as long as we get down."

On the second orbit they were approaching the earth at much slower speed, lowering to what Matt figured was one hundred miles above the surface. The *R-9* wheeled over the Union of South Africa, the land a dark mass overlaid with great drifts of gray-white clouds; then out again, but not so far, and slowing all the time, stopping at the apogee of the orbit and again falling toward the planet. Six hours, that circle, and the next time they were down to fifty miles. On the fourth orbit they stayed down, coasting over the South Atlantic and then Brazil, the land looking like a faded carpet seen through the wrong end of a telescope, the colors faded and blurred. The sky began to lose its velvety blackness; it took on a purple color, then blue. To the north the Aurora Borealis hung like a thin gauze veil. Their bodies began to take on weight.

The speed needle dropped past the 3000-mark and as they lost altitude Matt began to feel the air on the control surfaces; the wheel under his hand was still mushy but growing tighter. The *R-9* had become a high-speed glider, with its speed swiftly being converted into lift. He put the ship in a long, slow curve, heading north over Venezuela, then the West Indies. As the air thickened the cabin began to heat up. Even with the thermostat set at its lowest, the friction brought the temperature up to 100, then 110, and they began to sweat like stevedores.

LANSING took over the controls as they came across the tip of Florida. They turned west again and slid over the Southern States in a flat glide, the *R-9* constantly slowing, the temperature rising until it reached 120 degrees and held there. The steel walls of the cabin were now too hot to touch.

They came over California at six o'clock of a Sunday morning, three

men in a winged rocket, silent as a shadow; and their goal was Rogers Dry Lake, sixty-five miles north of Los Angeles.

It was time to strap down. Matt said: "All right, Lansing, I'll take over."

Lansing made no move to give up the wheel. He said: "Look, I'm the one to bring this crate in."

Matt had expected that. "Oh? What makes you think so?"

"I'm the better pilot, that's why."

MATT regarded him as one might inspect a two-headed calf. "What you mean is, you've had your picture in the papers more times than I have. I wouldn't trust you not to try a landing in the Municipal stadium, if you thought there'd be a crowd there."

"Go to hell!" Lansing retorted. "I'm bringing this ship in. And don't try to pull rank on me."

"I won't," Matt said evenly. "The only thing you seem to understand is a fist in your face. Get out of that chair."

Lansing hesitated, then stood up. "Have it your own way. But don't expect me to sit here in the nose. I'm strapping down on the couch in the galley."

"Wrong again," Matt said, getting into the chair. "That's Jessup's place."

"Let it go, Matt," Jessup said. "I'd prefer to stay here."

"Safer back there," Matt said.

Jessup said to Lansing, "Go ahead."

"You're a real brave man, Professor," Lansing said. And he left the cabin.

Jessup took the right-hand seat. He looked tired and haggard, his face burned a dull red. During the long drift back to earth his mood seemed to have become one of resignation, almost of hopelessness. Matt found it puzzling. He asked, "You feel all right, Ralph?"

"Sure. Why not?" The physicist reached over and extended his hand. "Thanks for the buggy ride, Major."

Matt shook hands warmly. He said, with more conviction than he felt, "Don't get the idea that we don't have a chance. We do—and a good one."

Jessup started to say something, then thought better of it. He was silent for a time, then said: "Well, it's been an experience, that's for sure."

"Yeah," Matt said. "Somebody had to be first."

They came over Muroc at fifteen thousand feet. At this altitude the strip looked no bigger than your hand but Matt knew it well. It was three miles wide and eleven long, a strip of hard-packed clay as flat as a billiard table.

He brought the R-9 down in sweeping circles over the mountains. He

swung wide and came around for the final approach, heading for the white strip. He could see the guide lines painted on the clay and lined up on one.

"Your straps tight?" He checked his own.

"Uh-huh." Jessup looked almost relaxed. "Good luck, Matt. I hope you bring it off."

"I'll give it a good try."

The airspeed registered better than three hundred miles an hour. And there were no wheels, only the metal belly of the ship, and when they hit the clay—

He figured the distance almost perfectly, coming over the railroad tracks twenty feet up, dropping it down close and letting it settle, the dark guide line flowing under the nose like a thin river; then feeling the first, almost imperceptible ripple of vibration as the R-9 skimmed the clay.

The shock threw him forward, away from the seat. He felt the belt tighten like a vise against his chest, but holding; heard the shriek of tortured metal; saw the strip running under the nose, erratically now as the R-9 lurched. An enormous grinding howl filled the cabin. Between his chair and Jessup's he saw the floor split apart as if cut by a knife. The ground in front of him tilted and rolled. He heard Jessup's sudden sharp cry as his acceleration chair tore loose from its bolts, and then Matt Riorden knew nothing more.

HE came back to consciousness slowly, as if he were rising out of dark water. An expanse of white resolved into the ceiling of a room. White curtains blew gently in the breeze from the window. It seemed to be twilight outside.

He moved his eyes and General Gaylor came into focus, standing at the foot of the bed. He caught another movement—a doctor, peering owlishly through horn-rimmed glasses, stood beside a small enamel stand.

"Hello, General." His voice sounded strange in his ears.

General Gaylor gripped the bedpost. His expression, Matt thought, was that of a man in church. "Hello, Matt. How do you feel, boy?"

"Not good. What's the matter with me?" He felt as if he were still strapped down on the acceleration couch. He had the strange tingling inside of him, and stronger now, as if his veins were filled with quicksilver; yet he had the tiredness, against which it was an effort to speak or keep his eyes open. He looked down at his hands. They were the color of mahogany.

The doctor moved over to the bed. "You took a bad beating, Major. You're lucky to be alive."

You don't have to tell me that, Matt thought. "General, that was the damndest landing you ever saw."

The General grunted. "I saw the ship. You did all right."

"What are you doing here?" Matt said. The General ought to be in Colorado. It was hard to put things together, somehow. Hard to focus his thoughts.

"I flew down as soon as I got the word." The General took out a cigar, bit the end off. "Your wife's on her way, Matt. Flying."

Louise. He'd forgotten about her. Louise. He'd be glad to see her; how glad, he'd never be able to put into words. Suddenly he remembered the security violation. The General hadn't mentioned it. *Careful now*, he thought. *Don't give yourself away.*

"General, did you find out about the leak?"

The General nodded. "Lansing. We checked back in a couple of hours. He told a reporter, a friend of his. The jerk couldn't keep it to himself."

Matt sighed. Not Louise! She hadn't talked. It seemed astonishing, now, that he ever could have thought she would. "Where is Lansing?"

"Down the hall," the General said. "Jessup, too. They're not expected to live."

The doctor muttered, "Just as well if—"

That sounded odd. "What do you mean? What kind of talk is that?"

General Gaylor said quickly: "He means they're pretty well smashed up, Matt."

"You got Jessup's records—the information?"

"We got it," the General said. He studied his cigar.

Matt looked at his hands. "What caused me—us—to tan like this, Doctor?"

"Major," the doctor said, "I don't like—"

"They haven't evaluated it yet," the General interrupted. "Don't worry about it now." He glanced at the doctor.

I'm not so sure, Matt thought tiredly. And the tingling. He asked the doctor about that.

"Well, you're full of drugs, Major. Naturally, you'll notice peculiar sensations."

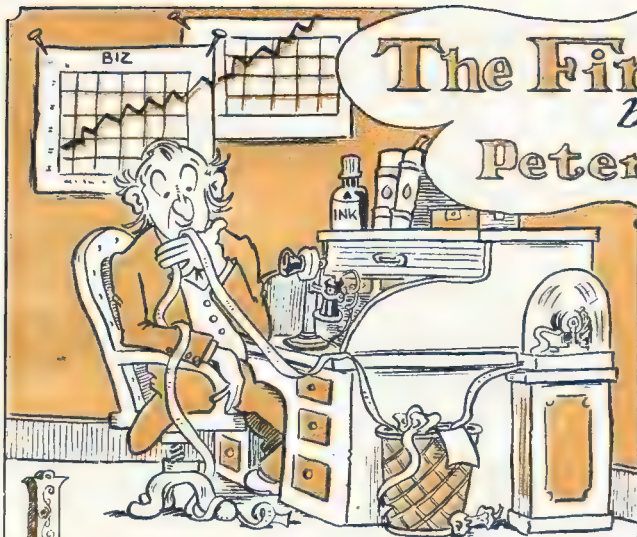
"Yeah," Matt said. He saw the General through a kind of mist. "Don't ask me to fly to the moon again, Sam. I've had it."

"I won't, boy."

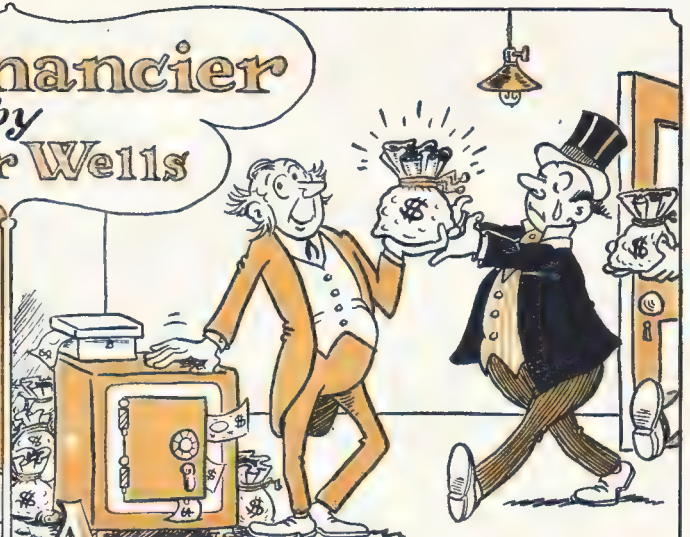
His body felt numb. The tingling seemed to be stronger. It was an effort to keep his eyes open. "I think I'll cork off for a while, Sam," he whispered. He closed his eyes, and so he didn't see the tears streaming down the General's face.

The Financier

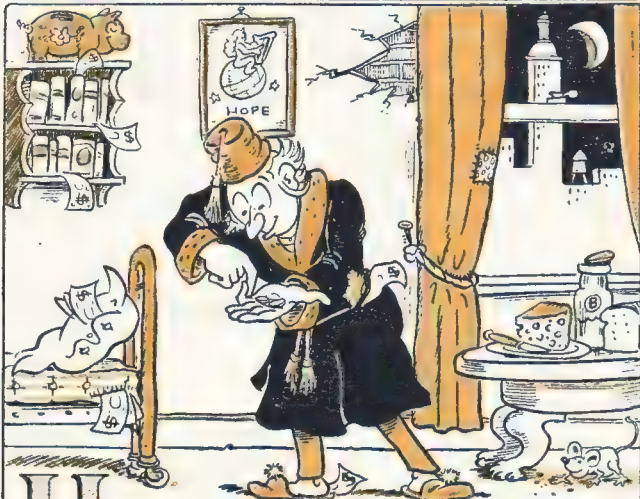
by Peter Wells



I have a friend who was once a *Financial Wizard*.



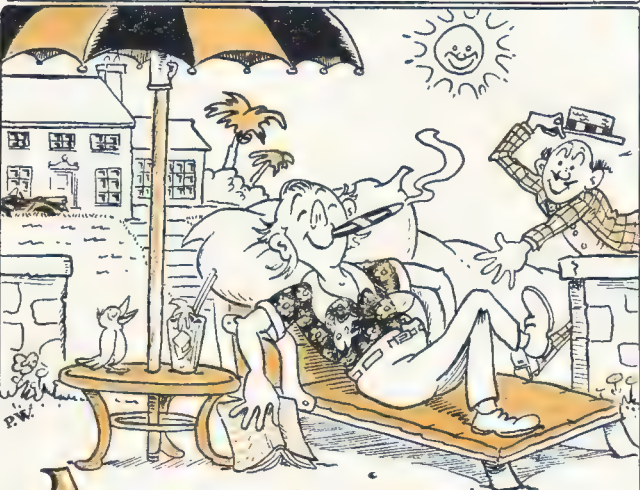
A real, sharp, honest-to-John Fiscal Whiz, with a saving nature!!



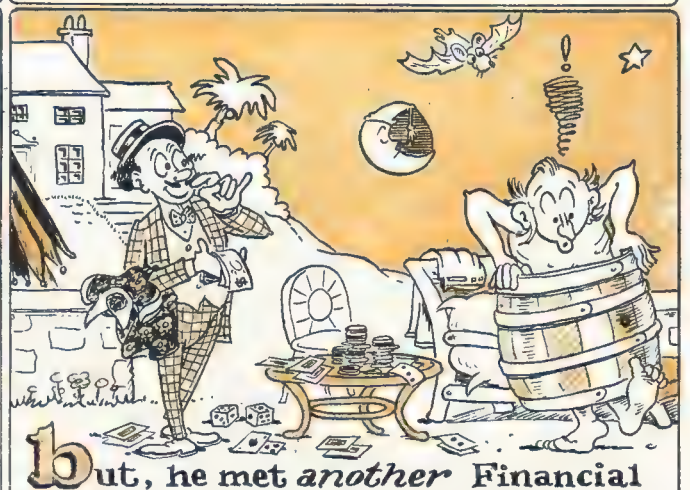
His manner of living was in penurious poverty, but his bank balance grew apace.



At last, taking his profits in large stacks, he quit commerce and retired to a pleasant spot...



And he planned to spend his days in quiet splendour, surrounded by easeful comfort...



but, he met another Financial Wizard who *hadn't* retired yet and was quickly separated from his hard-won gains!

moral: { It takes a *real* Wizard to hang onto the marbles... }

The Storm-bound



I TRIED to warn Johnny Deason that he'd get nowhere punching cows for the V Open A, or for any outfit.

"Look at me, Tapadero Smith," I began one October night when we were standing guard over the beef herd en route to the shipping pens at

Lockwood, and the cattle were lying quiet.

"I've seen lots of things I'd rather look at," he put in. "For example, this bedded herd. Nigh twelve hundred big steers resting at night under the stars. Glory, I even love the rank smell of 'em. And when the brutes

string out on the trail with the sunshine on their horns and on their coats—"

"Nuts!" I snorted. "What have I got to show for my life's work? *Nothing!* So, let me point out—"

"You've got to admit, old gloomhound, there's nothing else that com-

Herd

"On three occasions," observed Owen Wister, "men have been free and equal: in Paradise before the Fall; in the Declaration of Independence; and in the West before the barbed-wire fence came." . . . This novelette deals with the coming of that fence.

by STEPHEN PAYNE



pares with the pleasant side of cow-punching with a bunch of good fellows. Roping your circle horse at dawn, riding out on circle, whooping cattle from gullies and willows and ridges to the bunch ground."

"It's got into your blood," I protested. "But—"

"Maybe best of all is the campfire at night, and your bed under the stars. I even love night herding. . . . Sure, Tap, it's part of me. The only life for me."

"Don't try to throw me off," I growled. "You know what I mean. Eatin' horrible chuck, and sand and dust, workin' sixteen hours a day and standing guard to boot, gettin' soaked to the skin and your beddin' sopping wet every time it rains. Summers, baked till you crisp and dry out like a hunk of rawhide, and late falls and winters friz to death. Riskin' your neck on a bad bronc' or in a stampede, or ten times a day other ways. And," I wound up, "giving your youth and strength and the best years o' your life to a cold-blooded boss for thirty-five bucks a month and board."

Johnny snuffed out his cigarette and chuckled. "Good try, Tap. But when I get to be foreman of a big outfit, I'll be sitting on top of the world."

"Sure, sure," I said cynically. He had told me he'd had his eyes on that goal ever since he'd left home at sixteen and fought his way up the cowboy ladder from wrangler to top hand. And he liked the V Open A because it was a fifteen-thousand-head outfit and had the best summer and winter range he'd ever seen. "But Johnny," I went on, "there ain't no future in it. You can't get married, 'cause the only home you've got is the chuck wagon, and—"

"I see that old brindle outlaw steer's gettin' restless," Johnny interrupted, unhooking his right leg from around his saddle horn and putting his foot with a gunnysack overshoe tied over his boot back into the stirrup. "Chuck wagon? What better home does a cowboy want? And Tap, Martin Sommers didn't strike me as a cold-blooded boss. It's true, I've seen mighty little of him. Just at the home ranch when he hired me, and again when he came out to the round-up to help shape up this beef herd. But any man who likes dogs as much as Martin likes his pets is—well, we had that much in common."

"Uh-huh!" I agreed. "I like the old man too, or I'd not have stuck all these years, the last six of 'em working under Bern Holman. And is he a barbed-wire foreman!"

"Bern," said Johnny, and his square-cut brown face tightened, "got

a big kick out of telling me that he'd hit me with a pay check the minute this herd is loaded on the cars. So," —he hunched his shoulders and turned his horse—on to yet another range, still just a cowboy."

Johnny circled around the big herd singing:

*My ceiling is the sky; my floor is the grass,
My music is the lowing of herds as they pass;*

My books are the brooks; my Bible's the stones,

My parson is a wolf on his pulpit of bones.

Under my breath I echoed: "'Still just a cowboy.' . . . Hi, that applies to both Granny Mell Mathers and me. At sixty-odd years, we're still just cowboys."

THE stars were fading and the herd was beginning to come awake when Nevada Red and Bill Frank loped out from camp to relieve me and Johnny. As we met them, youthful Bill sang out:

"Don't rub Soggy-sinkers Sam the wrong way. He's got a real grouch on. I won fourteen dollars shootin' craps with him last night, and now he's found out that us danged thievin' cowpunchers has stole all his gunnysacks to make ourselves overshoes out of. . . . When I get rich and own a lot of cows, I'll buy real overshoes."

"Humph!" I snorted. "Punchin' for wages, you'll never own even one cow. Takes all you make to keep you in clothes and an outfit and tobacco, to say nothin' of luxuries like whisky and pokerin'."

"And Granny's liver is givin' him terrible pains," Nevada put in irritably. "Is that old coot sick, or is he puttin' it all on?"

"I don't think he can be puttin' it on," said Johnny.

"Maybe not," Nevada returned. "If he is, he's made a sucker out of you every time you've stood night herd for him."

Johnny and I loped to the chuck wagon, where Soggy Sam's fire with Dutch ovens and pots was a bright and inviting picture. Granny Mathers and Bern Holman had caught and saddled their morning horses, and were now hugging the fire, and although Granny wore a cap, Angora chaps, two sweaters and a horsehide coat, he was shivering pitifully.

At the front end of the wagon was the rope corral where the cavvy was

bunched—the horses quiet, humped-up and shivering, the cavy bells silent. Young Poncho, the wrangler, guarding the open side of the corral, called: "Gosh sakes, fellers, hurry up! And while you're at it, rope ol' Moonstone for me, Deason. Then I can let these bronc's go, and come feed myself and get warm. Last night was awful!"

Approaching the cavy, rope in hand, Johnny grinned at him. "Get a blanket off cookie's bed, Poncho," he advised. "Cut it in two and wrap your feet in the pieces."

Soggy overheard this, and yelled: "If any double-danged puncher takes anything more o' mine, I'll bleach his bones, I will!"

With the skill of long practice, Deason roped three horses from the cavy, Moonstone for Poncho, the Burro for me, Snake-eyes for himself. The three of us saddled up, then we washed and made a run for the cook's pots and the fire.

Johnny and I sat on our bed-roll with our plates of grub on our knees. Granny looked at us and muttered, "Seems how them pills don't take hold like they used to."

"Heck, Granny, it ain't your liver," giped Johnny. "It's this chuck Soggy feeds us. I taste tallow for four hours after I eat. Only last night I stuffed two of Sam's sinkers in my pockets, and when that old brindle outlaw started to sneak outa the herd, I socked him between the horns with one of 'em. When Old Brindle finally came to, he was a tamed dogie."

"Aw you! Lay off!" bellowed Soggy. "If you don't like my grub, you can quit."

"No, we can't," said Granny seriously. "Not when we got to get this herd through, short-handed like we be, and no more men to be picked up no place 'long the trail."

Bern Holman dropped his dishes in the cook's wrecking pan. Then he got the rifle we ordinarily kept in the chuck wagon, filled its magazine and remarked to nobody in particular: "I'm going to shoot three mongrel curs this mornin'."

THE statement was like an unexpected flash of lightning. Soggy and Poncho lifted their heads as if waiting for the crack of thunder. Granny Mathers choked on the pill he was trying to swallow. I tightened up, and Johnny Deason's "What's this, Bern?" struck loud in the silence.

Bern planted himself in front of Johnny. In manner and appearance, he often reminded me of a proddy bull, and in fact he prided himself on being willing and able to whip his considerable weight in wildcats. "I'll just tell you," he said. "Last year Ab Leftwaller squatted on a hunk of ground, four, five miles from here,

and his homestead blocks our trail. Late last fall I had one set-to with that nester and his damn dogs. Now, unless they're killed, we won't get these boogery steers past his claim. . . . Want to make somethin' of it?"

The eyes of the two men locked and dueled; and as Johnny hesitated, I thought bitterly: *He's going to back down. He ain't got the backbone to—*

Johnny shrugged. "Make something of it? You ain't given me any reason to worry about what'll happen to a certain trail-herd boss I know."

Bern hunched a shoulder, strode to his horse, hung the rifle on his saddle and rode eastward down the valley.

"You said a mouthful," I told Johnny. "Yet I wonder if it got over to Bern?"

"When you shoot a man's dog, you're sure going to get the man on your neck," Granny exclaimed. "It occurred to Johnny that Leftwaller'll be doin' some shootin' too."

"Jumping snakes!" said Soggy. "Maybe we'll be short one trail boss!"

"Boys, this ain't funny," Granny told us. "If Bern gets a shot in his brisket, Nevada Red and Bill Frank are sure to take up the fight, and all hell'll be to pay."

"Bring me up to date, men," said Johnny. "Didn't you take this same trail last year with the beef drive? And wasn't Leftwaller—"

"Yes, this is our usual trail along Whispering River," I told him. "Last year this settler had a cabin built, and he'd put up a couple of stacks of hay. But he didn't have his claim fenced, and he wasn't at home when we passed."

"Then, late in November, Bern visited Leftwaller's place," Granny supplied. "But up until just now Bern never has opened his head on what he intended to do, or what happened."

"Poncho!" I called. "You rode ahead yesterday evening. What's the setup at Leftwaller's place?"

"The man's gone to Lockwood after a load of grub," answered the wrangler. "But his wife and daughter and a boy younger'n me are at home. The dogs too—three of 'em. They almost didn't let me get near the place, and this kid throwed rocks at me as I rode away."

As if touched by a prod pole, Johnny came to his feet. "You told Bern that Leftwaller wasn't at home?"

"Sure I did."

Johnny ran to his horse, and I burst out: "As if the danger of the herd's drifting into Scrub Oak Brakes after we're well past this settler's ranch wasn't enough to worrit a man sick, this showdown has to bust when we're still three bedgrounds from Lockwood!" Then I was following Johnny.

"Where you goin'?" I questioned. "Let me warn you, Bern's bad medicine to monkey with; and after all, he's the boss."

"I like dogs," he said, giving me a level look, "better than I like some people." He was letting me know he hadn't been either blind or deaf to Bern Holman's pouring it on him all the days he'd been riding for V Open A.

"Trail along with me or not as you like, Tap," he added, swinging to saddle and skillfully coaxing his shivering horse, to keep it from pitching.

I hunched my scrawny shoulders and trailed along.

WE soon left the beef herd behind us as we spurred to a keen lope on Bern Holman's trail. Two fat coyotes eyed us with curiosity, as we passed them, but no marked fear, and seventeen deer in one bunch crossed the valley from north to south ahead of us.

The massive bulk of Bear Mountain rose at our left; Whispering River, and the jumbled and wooded and ragged hills beyond, were at our right. Then we topped a low hill, and directly ahead I saw a new north-south fence across the full width of valley.

Beyond the fence was plowed land and in a stubbled meadow four small haystacks. This was Leftwaller's ranch. His log house, barn, shed and corral sat near the base of Bear Mountain. A small herd of dairy cattle were in the corral; pigs, chickens and half a dozen sheep prowled the yard. North of the buildings, a fence ran east and west; between it and the mountain was a narrow space left open for a road.

I had taken all of this in at a glance while a loud barking drummed against my ears. The three dogs were rushing toward Bern Holman, who had dismounted, and was crouching on one knee, with the rifle at his shoulder.

Bern hadn't seen Johnny and me, and Johnny left his saddle in a flying leap out over his horse's shoulder. He landed on Bern's back, flattening him against the earth in the very instant Bern's rifle cracked. Unhit, the dogs stopped, showing their fangs and barking, but not closing in. They were mongrels, but the predominant blood strain in the two woolly yellow-brown males and one female was that of collie.

Out of the tangle of thrashing bodies, Johnny came to his feet with the rifle in one hand. He tossed it aside, and in the next instant plucked Bern's Colt from its holster and threw it after the rifle. Then Bern was up, hatless, glowering, spitting dirt out of his mouth. He rasped:

"You, huh! Damn you, you're askin' for it, I'll—"

"Take it easy, Bern," clipped Johnny. "I intend to lick you. But not until after the cattle are loaded."

"You lick me? Why, I'll whittle you down to—" And Bern lunged.

His horse wheeled away, and I caught both it and Johnny's, resenting that I had to take my eyes from that knock-down, drag-out fight. Bern was big-framed and hard-muscled and brutal. He slammed Johnny with sledgehammer blows that would have killed me or old Granny Mathers. Johnny took 'em and handed back as good as sent. He was only twenty-four, light on his feet as a deer, agile as a mustang, and every bit as tough.

They slugged toe to toe, Bern boring in, hoping to end it quick. Johnny gave ground, eluding Bern and avoiding a particularly savage knee jab to his groin which would have finished him. I yelled, "Keep it clean, Bern!" But he didn't hear me.

All at once he laid Johnny down with a punch to the chin, and I half drew my gun as he pounced and reached for Johnny's throat. But Johnny wasn't there. Johnny was up, and Bern hit ground, hard.

Waiting for him, Johnny panted: "Get up and fight."

Bern rose slowly, shaking his head as if to clear it, and now Johnny really tore into him. No science in his fighting, just punches slamming to Bern's mid-section and face. Slowly, surely, Bern wilted. His knees buckled. He fell, rolled over, grunted, "'Nuff. Lay off!" batting his eyes as if he couldn't understand how this cowpuncher had licked him.

"Okay," said Johnny, panting like a windbroken horse. "Now you go back to the herd. I'll handle this situation. And no dogs will be killed. Get that?"

The three dogs were still present, and lifting my gaze to the buildings, I saw a woman at the house door, a shotgun in her hands, behind her a girl. Outside of the barn a boy stared our way, and called to the dogs: "Here Nedder, Scotty! Here, Sue!" But they paid no attention.

Bern sat up. "I can't face the men nor boss 'em after this, and you damned well know it," he muttered.

"Yes, you can! You've got to take this herd through. You're the boss."

"Yeh, I'm still the boss. You're fired, Deason. Get goin' and don't come back.... Tap, you'll tell the boys I licked him? You've got to tell 'em I licked Johnny!"

Johnny collected the rifle and Bern's Colt. "I ain't going," he contradicted flatly. "Get back to the herd, Bern. Go with him, Tap."

Bern wobbled to his horse and climbed into his saddle. "So you



"You know what I mean. Riskin' your neck on a bad bronc."

won't go? Well,"—his bruised lips twisted as if the thought gave him some pleasure—"let's see you take the herd through, smart *hombre*—one man short. Martin Sommers is in Lockwood, waiting for this herd to arrive. I'm going to see him. You'll find you ain't heard the last of this!"

The dogs barked and nipped his horse's heels as it passed them and left the Leftwaller ranch behind.

"This is the damndest thing," I said stupidly.

Johnny handed me the rifle and the Colt, and walked toward the three dogs, talking to them. In about a minute one came up and sniffed at his hand, and Johnny rubbed it behind its ears.

"Which one of you is Nedder?" he asked. The biggest and darkest-colored cocked his ears, said "Woof!" and held out his right paw.

Johnny shook hands with him. "Good boy, Nedder.... And you're

Scotty?"—petting the next bigger one. "And you're Sue, o' course. Now let's get acquainted with Tap, fellers." And he led them toward me. "For all he looks like a cross between an Apache and a pirate, and can find the gloomy side of a rainbow, he's a good scout and won't hurt you."

The dogs treated me politely, but they didn't take to me as they did to Johnny. "'Gloomy side of a rainbow!'" I repeated. "Sure, you did the right thing. But Bern has shoved the responsibility of getting the herd through right spang onto you, Johnny."

"Onto me?" the puncher asked, lifting his eyebrows. "As the old hand, Tap, of course you'll take over."

"You got that wrong, cowboy. I never was no account handling men or taking responsibility."

"What's wrong with swinging around this settler's claim and avoiding it altogether?" Johnny asked.



It was plain she was deeply moved, yet she laughed gayly. "Well, you made a hit with Scotty, Nedder and Sue," she teased.

"Can't be done," I said. "Plumb savage, brush-clad hills in south of the river, which maybe a fox or a coyote can get through, but nary horse nor cow. To the north, on the slope of Bear Mountain, same sort of thing. The mountain itself is cut by deep gashes only a bird can cross, and it's rock-palisaded at the top."

Crouched down, Johnny worked a cocklebur out of Nedder's hair and glanced thoughtfully along that narrow lane between the ragged slope of Bear Mountain and the Leftwaller fence. "There are a lot of sights and sounds and smells around here, any one of 'em enough to booger those big steers," he said. "But if the sheep and pigs are shoved into their pens, and if these dogs are locked in the house or barn—"

He stopped and shook his head. "No good. There'll still be the smells. However, there's a good half mile between the buildings and the river. Surely these folks'll let us cross their meadow. . . . Take this rifle and Colt, Tap, and lope back and tell the boys to bring on the cattle."

Leading his mount, he walked along the road, two dogs romping ahead, and old Nedder proudly escorting him.

I TURNED my horse. The sun had come up, to dip almost immediately under a cloud—not a good sign. Yet in this cloudy light, hills and hollows, touched by autumn's vivid colorings, were savagely beautiful, and the big trail-herd, now spread out and grazing in the wide valley, was as fine a sight as any man could hope to see.

Here came the wagon—Soggy-sinkers Sam handling the ribbons over his

sturdy four-horse team and probably dreaming of the good booze he'd lap up once he hit Lockwood. Ye-ah, the first day out on the return trip, some of us hands'd have to load him in his wagon and drive his team.

"Okay up ahead, Tap?" Soggy called. I said, "Yep," and handed the cook the rifle and Bern's revolver.

When I reached the herd, Nevada Red, Bill Franks and Granny Mell Mathers loped out to meet me. Now counting Johnny, we had only five cowboys. Six had been enough so the night-herd shifts, though double length, with two riders to each shift, broke all right. Now, in addition to his own, someone was going to have to take the shift that had been Bern's.

"Johnny blocked Bern's loco notion," I told the men. "And Bern has rid out."

They didn't believe me. Who ever heard of a trail boss quitting his herd? So I told them what had happened, concluding, "And now, boys, like it or not, Johnny's our boss. We've got to stand by him."

"Like hell he's boss!" snapped Nevada Red. "Nesters and such-like always have mongrel curs that ought to be kilt! I was sidin' Bern all the way."

Nevada Red's correct name was unknown, and none of us ever asked it, for quite soon after Bern hired him we had found that he was an outlaw.

Knife- and bullet-scarred, Nevada, at forty-odd, was as tough as he looked: a bald dome, a fringe of red hair, two sharp blue eyes, a broken nose, a lanky frame and a low-hung gun gave him an almost sinister appearance. But from handling stock in the dark of the moon, rustlers and horsethieves acquire a knack which the average waddy never quite equals, and this "long-rider" was a horseman and cowhand from who-laid-the-chunk.

Bill Frank, on the contrary, was a young buck with wild ideas, a swelled head and a loud mouth. Liking Nevada's style and not knowing any better, Bill was sure to string along with his hero. So I wasn't surprised when he said: "Nevada, whatever you say goes with me. Do we cut our strings now?"

"Not yet," Nevada answered. "Bern couldn't really have meant he'd ride out. He'll be back."

GRANNY'S face had fallen so far he was almost stepping on his chin. Probably he was afraid that only three of us'd be left with the herd; himself, Johnny and me. Three men with twelve hundred cattle! Unless it was on wide-open prairie, such a pitiful few would be helpless as a calf cut off from its mother by five coyotes.

Bill Frank nodded, and then ejaculated: "Sa-ay, I didn't think Johnny could lick Bern."

Swinging in behind the herd, we pushed it along. Johnny met us, told me to come up on point, and turned the cattle off the road, to the right.

"I've opened the fence, and we're going through Leftwaller's field, close by the river," he announced.

"Good! You got permission?"

"No."

"No? Why, after you stopped Bern's play, I'd have thought—"

"—they'd be reasonable? Trying to make peace with that woman and reason with her was like trying to pet a trapped bear. Still, I don't blame the family for hating this outfit. Mrs. Leftwaller told me that Bern visited their ranch last November. He introduced himself and said: 'The V Open A's giving you twenty-four hours to get gone.'

"I suspect Leftwaller's plenty salty himself. Anyhow, he told Bern where he could go, and Bern left. But late that night he sneaked back and had set fire to a stack of hay—hay the Leftwalters had to have for their small dairy herd—when the dogs sounded off and woke the settlers."

"So-ho! 'Twas the dogs spoiled Bern's fun," I put in.

"They ganged up on Bern, and even though he emptied his six-shooter, made him high-tail it, pronto. . . . Tap, was Martin Sommers standing back of his foreman in this deal?"

"No," I said positively. "Nor do I think Martin knows of the rough stuff Bern's been putting over on homesteaders the last couple of years. It's probable Bern figured Leftwaller's claim would block our cattle trail, and for that reason he planned to scare him out. Then when Leftwaller defied him, it brought out the mean streak in Bern."

Johnny nodded and said tautly: "Leftwaller sent a bill to V Open A for the burned hay. So far, Martin Sommers has ignored it."

I pulled my horse to a sudden stop. "What's this? I think—I blamed well know—I'd have heard about it, if the old man had got that bill.... He didn't get it!... Did you tell Mrs. Leftwaller Martin'd pay it?"

"Yes, I did. After I'd done that, the woman let me lock the dogs in the barn. But when Nedder, Scotty and Sue heard our wagon and cavvy on the road, they tuned up so strong I realized there was no hope of getting the steers past the buildings. So I asked if we could cut through the field. 'No,' she said. 'Ab left a space for a road, and that's that.'"

I looked at Johnny, sizing him up once again. His short, rough-hewn and whisker-stubbed face was tight and unsmiling. He had not liked the decision which he had been compelled to make. But shouldering full responsibility, he had taken the only way he could see.

By this time, the cattle were stringing across Leftwaller's meadow, and I was looking uneasily toward the buildings at our left, where a woman, a girl and a boy were watching from the yard. All at once the boy ran to the little stable. A minute later, Nedder, Scotty and Sue were dashing down the field. They had been trained to chouse livestock off this land, and my panicked thought was that nothing short of killing could stop them.

JOHNNY swore and launched his horse toward the three yellow-brown animals. But the racket of their barking had already alarmed the big steers. It seemed certain that half the herd, or more, would turn back in the direction from which they'd come and stampede.

Suddenly I saw Nevada Red yank his gun and cut out toward the dogs. My heart was somewhere in my throat, and my mouth so dry I couldn't spit. Johnny, however, was well ahead of Nevada. Sliding his mount to a stop, he leaped off and began talking to Nedder, Scotty and Sue. They ganged up around him, giving out with such a lot of noise it made the cattle break into a run, though with the herd unbroken and following its leaders.

Nevada Red reined up, gun pointing at the dogs. I couldn't hear what Johnny said to him, but that hard-bitten hand, who hated dogs and nesters and declared "all mutts oughta be killed," holstered his Colt and turned back to the herd, which went on across the field and emptied out on the far side.

After Johnny had returned the dogs to the Leftwaller place, he asked me to fix up the fences as good as they had been. I had finished on the west side, and was working on the farther one when the boy and the girl came up, riding a couple of plugs bareback.

THE kid said: "I didn't go to let Nedder and the others out the barn. Honest, Mister, I just wanted to get my horse and have a close look at you cowboys and the cattle."

He was around fifteen, a tow-head, bright eyes and a wide-lipped mouth, freckles across his nose and cheeks.

"You want to be a cowboy?" I asked. "Most kids do, I reckon."

"Uh? Cowmen is meaner'n dirt. But I wish they wasn't, 'cause then I'd—" He stopped.

The girl spoke. "Dad had a claim in Kansas, and the cowmen drove us off it. The same thing happened in another State. Then we moved here. It didn't seem as if 'way off like this we'd bother anyone, but the greedy V Open A outfit won't let us alone."

She was darker than her brother, and maybe five years older. Her eyes flashed defiance, and her right pretty

face showed anger, though it was well controlled.

I watched her close, and said: "If I was Johnny Deason, young lady, I'd camp on your doorstep till you promised to marry me."

"What? Why, that's crazy!" She colored more beautifully than any sunset. "Mother will shoot that cowboy if he ever comes to our ranch again. He said Martin Sommers would pay for this damage. But will he?"

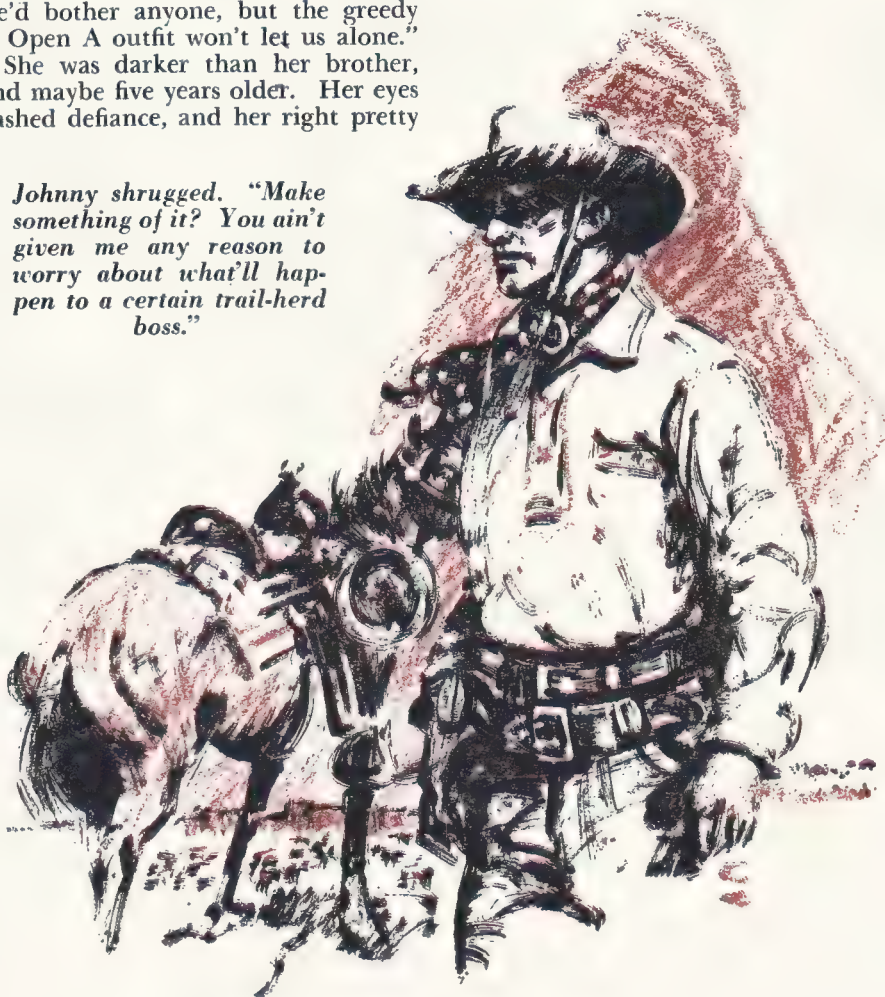
"Johnny'll pay for it out of his wages if he has to," I said. "He's that kind of a feller. Tell me your name, won't you?"

The girl set her mouth tight, but the boy said: "She's Ella and I'm Ted. You want me to tell you how we got this deal figured? You fellers had to get your cattle past here, so that dirt-mean Bern Holman—we know him, all right, don't we, sis?—makes like he's going to shoot our dogs. Johnny pretends to lick him and Bern rides off, then Johnny tries to soft-soap us."

"Whoa, son. Hold up," I stuttered.

The lad went on: "That tricky play didn't fool Mother. Bern'll soon join the outfit again and think up more devilment to make things tough for us. Darn all cowpunchers, includin' you, you ugly old coot!"

Johnny shrugged. "Make something of it? You ain't given me any reason to worry about what'll happen to a certain trail-herd boss."



"That the way you doped it out, Ella?" I asked.

"Yes. Ted and I came to see that you fixed the fence, not to try to make friends. . . . Between here and Lockwood you'll meet my father coming home with a load of grub. Will your outfit pick a fight with him? Will he be in real danger? Tell me the truth."

I began, "Don't be silly," and then had a panicky thought. If Bern had headed to Lockwood, he'd meet Ab Leftwalter. Bern might take out on the homesteader some of the spite sizzling inside him.

"Dad's got his gun," spoke Ted confidently.

Ella gave me a level, searching look, her face full of anxiety. "I think I shall ride to meet Dad. Ted, you stay home and take care of Mother."

"Wait up a minute, Ella," I said. "It's a sixty-five-mile ride to Lockwood, and no place to put up until you get within twenty miles of town. You figuring to ride bareback, and with no warmer clothes than you're wearing?"

Without answering, she beckoned to her brother, and they drifted away toward their home buildings.

I SWUNG to saddle and overtook the herd, now grazing once again. A few miles ahead to our right lay the menace of Scrub Oak Brakes; in the north and west, storm-clouds gathered, and a chill, dismal wind began to blow down from Bear Mountain. I shivered, and my nerves tightened with dread.

Soggy had made dinner camp. We ate and changed horses in relays and drifted the cattle slowly onward. Again the wagon and cavvy pulled out ahead. Toward three o'clock Ella Leftwalter appeared. Much later, I learned that she'd waited for her mother to finish knitting a pair of mittens before taking the trail.

Johnny Deason rode to intercept her, but she wouldn't stop to talk to him, and he made the mistake of letting her go on.

I spurred up to him. "You should have stopped her and made her go home."

"Why didn't you stop her?"

"Aw—I didn't want to get those folks down on us any more than they are already."

"Neither did I," he said with a wry smile, adding: "I don't think the storm'll amount to anything."

"Well, you might have told her she'll be too late to stop Bern from troubling her dad."

"I did. But she didn't believe me, because she's certain that Bern is here with the outfit."

The wind increased and the day grew darker. At four o'clock the storm really hit. Sam and Poncho

had made camp, and had put up the tent, something which never happened unless there was rain or snow, and Johnny now told Poncho to stay with the cavvy, keep the horses out of the brush and close to the wagon so we could get fresh mounts.

By this time, Nevada Red was sure Bern had really pulled out and he allowed that he'd go too. He said he'd be damned if he'd take orders from Johnny Deason. Bill Frank echoed Nevada, Bill being the kind of fellow who'd always require either a partner or a leader.

I'd have cussed Nevada and Bill and said: "You can't quit in a pinch. You got to stay."

Not Johnny. He said, and quietly: "Okay, if that's the way you want it, boys. Catch your own private horses and drift. I won't have to live with you, but you'll have to live with yourselves, and when you look back on this incident—"

When he purposely left his statement hanging, I realized that he knew it carried far more impact that way.

Nevada growled: "That 'square-shootin' cowboys' code' don't hold for me. I don't talk about it, but it ain't no secret that I've rid with the Wild Bunch."

"I reckon the Wild Bunch has its code too," Johnny returned.

Nevada didn't say more. But he and Bill loped to the chuck wagon and presently came back astride fresh mounts. Then, with me and ol' Granny and Johnny, they did their best to hold the steers. We rode down our horses; we wore out our voices, and we wore out the ends of our ropes beating on those critters. Once I heard Johnny singing to 'em:

*Oh, I'm sitting in the saddle and I want
to go to sleep,
Wonder why? Wonder why?
Cattle all a-milling and the snow a-falling
deep
Wonder why? Wonder why?*

But his song had no soothing power over the cattle in that blizzard. A solid wall of forty men couldn't have held those big-horned brutes. It wasn't that the critters stampeded. They were like floodwater running down a river channel, slow but with overwhelming force, moving irresistibly through the blinding storm and pitch-black night, drifting with the wind. No horse could stand against them. They shoved us five helpless and impotent riders ahead of their wall of horns and bodies, and they poured into the tangle of scrub oak brush. This was what they were instinctively seeking; shelter and protection from the icy wind, and the feed they would find in that jungle.

Toward midnight us riders drew together in the dark and the storm,

and counted noses. Five. At least we hadn't lost a man.

"What about that girl?" asked Johnny. "How far would she have got before the storm?"

"Maybe five miles," I grunted. "Look here, Johnny, on a night like this, it's suicide and nothin' else for anyone to try to find her."

"Ye-ah," spoke Nevada Red. "But Johnny'll have to live with himself—if he don't go huntin' for her! . . . Come on to camp, fellers. I'll lead the way. You can't lose an old owl-hooter like me in no damn storm. . . . I'll help you get a fresh horse, Johnny, and you'd better take along an extra."

"You'll side me, Nevada?" asked Johnny quickly.

"Side you?" repeated the tough hand. "Why should—" He hesitated, then snapped: "Cub, this is the second time you've put me in a spot where I can't let you down. You're damn right I'll side you."

We found the cavvy, Poncho ahead of it, holding the horses from drifting. Not so hard to do, for horses hump up, tail to the wind, and take it. But horses need to eat at night, and ours weren't getting any feed this night. Nevada's experience as an owl-hooter proved mighty useful. How in the darkness and the storm he could pick out the horses he wanted to catch, and then rope them, I'll never know. But he did it. Johnny put Granny's saddle on the third horse, and the two headed out into the blizzard.

I was so worn down I could hardly force myself to move, and Granny collapsed before we made our way to the camp. Bill lugged him in.

CAMP wasn't a comfortable place. The tent had blown down and only the guy-ropes had stopped it from blowing away. Soggy was bedded in his usual place under the wagon, and because he had rings and snaps on his tarp, making it a kinda sleeping-bag, it hadn't been wrenched off him. Bill and I got Granny under the tent, out of the wind, and he whispered: "Tap, I can tell you now. I was feelin' horrible all afternoon. Seemed like I jus' couldn't stay in my saddle. Yet with the storm, I had to hold up my end. I done 'er, didn't I? Didn't I?"

'Twas important to him to know whether he had. I said, kinda choky: "You're doggoned right you did."

There were three bed-rolls. Two of them Bill and I used to help prop up the snow-soaked tent so there'd be a little air space. Then we unrolled the third one, put Granny in the middle, Bill crawling in on one side and me on t'other to keep him warm.

"This cawpunchin' is the only life," I grunted.

Bill quoted from an old song: "'Boys, tar and feather me and ride

me on a rail, if you ever catch me on another cattle trail."

A fellow's hindsight's always better'n his foresight. Either I or Johnny should have stopped Ella from taking that ride. Now that it was too late, I shuddered. Then I thought, "Old owl-hooter Nevada sided Johnny, so there's a thin sliver of hope."

"Bill Frank," I called across Granny's huddled body, "what's Nevada got against dogs?"

"Huh?"—half asleep. "What you want to know for, Tap?"

"As a general thing, there ain't no good in a feller who hates dogs. He'll hate kids and horses too. Yet this Nevada's as considerate of horses as I am."

"Oh, I savvy! Well, one time Nevada had it all planned to steal a half-dozen good horses. A couple dogs knocked his scheme sky-high, and he pretty nigh got himself snuffed out."

"Still, I suppose it didn't break him of stealing horses?"

TOWARD dawn I came awake, hearing noises. The wind had slacked off, snow still falling. Nevada and Johnny had come, and they had Ella with 'em. She had realized she would be lost in the blizzard, and had turned back. When she couldn't make her nag face into the wind, she had the good sense to take refuge behind a huge boulder, where Johnny and Nevada wouldn't have ever found her, only her horse whinnied when the cowboys were passing. She hadn't been able to make a fire, and when they got to her she was pretty near frozen and ready to give up and go to sleep forever.

Johnny now rustled wood and built a fire. Soggy came alive and made breakfast. Bill and Nevada and I put up the tent. Poncho rode in, half frozen, got coffee and beefsteak inside him, and went back to his cavy. Granny crept out of bed to swallow some hot coffee, but he wouldn't eat.

Johnny insisted Ella go to bed in the tent. But she'd have none of it, seeming to resent, and strongly, that he had put her under obligations to our "mean" V Open A outfit. "I'm not going to stay here," she said to me. "I'm going home."

"Storm ain't over," I told her. "Wind'll be howlin' again at sunrise. You sit tight!"

"We'll all take it easy," Johnny said, "until this storm lets up a little. Then to get the cattle out of brush and—"

"We won't get 'em out," I cut in. "Two years ago this same thing happened. We fought that brush for eight days and managed to find three hundred head out of nine hundred. The rest of the herd stayed in that jungle all winter. Snow piled up



Johnny left his saddle in a flying leap. . . . Bern rasped: "You! I'll—"

neck-deep to a tall Indian. Come spring, the small portion of the herd that pulled through moseyed out of their own accord, and like cattle always do, headed back to their old range. Martin Sommers is going to have to take another bad loss, Johnny, and he'll blame you more than the rest of us."

Ella showed unexpected interest. "Why will Mr. Sommers blame Johnny?" she asked me. "And tell me, where's Bern Holman?"

Something clicked in my mind. "You supposed he was still with us, didn't you? You and your mother believed that fight yesterday was faked?"

The girl nodded. "Mother's had a lot of experience with cattlemen. All of it's been unpleasant. She knows they're tricky, and she saw right through that play." Angrily, she added: "There was no real reason why your cattle shouldn't have followed the road."

"I hate to contradict a lady," I said. "But you just don't savvy range cattle, or cowboys either."

"I savvy that they think they own the world and will ride roughshod over settlers. Your Johnny said to Mother: 'This herd is going through, Mrs. Leftwaller. To go through, it's got to cross your land, so we'll cross it.' He's no better than Bern Holman. He was brutal last night, too. He slapped me, then forced me to come back here with him! . . . Why won't you tell me where Bern is?"

I saw that young Bill was taking in all Ella said, and he was frowning. But with a shrug I answered the girl: "Johnny had to slap you awake to keep you from freezing. . . . Bern's in Lockwood, likely, giving Martin Sommers an earful of lies. . . . Miss Ella, that fight wasn't faked. Bern really lit a shuck."

"Why did Bern 'light a shuck?'" Ella persisted. "I know what that means, even if I don't savvy cowboys."



"Which one of you is Nedder?" he asked. The biggest and darkest-colored cocked his ears, said

"'Cause he couldn't face the boys and admit he'd taken the beating he had coming."

"The beating he had coming?"

"Uh-huh. He sure had it comin'." Puzzled lines showed between her brows. "So his own men—or one of his own men—licked him. No, I guess I don't understand cowboys."

"And that's too bad, Ella. 'Cause you may some day kinda like one cowboy, once you've got to know him like I do."

She gave me a level look. "I think I hate all of you," she said, and stepped into the tent.

Although the storm had resumed its fury, Johnny plodded out to the cavy and came back with a fresh horse. He called to Ella, inside the tent, which we had now staked and anchored down to where the wind couldn't rip it away: "I'm going to your ranch and I'll tell your folks you're safe."

She answered: "I'm going with you. If you can get to the ranch, so can I."

"I won't let you risk it. . . . Keep her here, fellows, no matter what notions she gets."

He swung up. At his stirrup, I said: "Why the heck you going to Leftwalter's ranch? Maybe even you can't make it."

"I've got to get help. We'll be one day late as it is."

Granny was at the fire. But Nevada, Bill and Soggy had closed in on us. "Get help?" asked Nevada incredulously. "How? Where?"

"Nedder, Scotty and Sue," said Johnny. He grinned.

"B'golly," cried Granny, overhearing, "I figure Martin Sommers's going to be mighty glad his foreman didn't get to shoot them curs!"

Johnny rode away, and the swirling blizzard seemed to swallow him. It was nine o'clock, and Ella at last decided she would lie down in one of our beds. We dragged the other two out of the tent, and Nevada, Bill, Granny and I bedded down in the snow with all our clothes on.

I think a cowpuncher can sleep under almost any conditions. Anyhow, I got a good nap and woke up hearing Soggy howl: "Hot stuff!"

The storm had slacked off, the sun showed itself for a few minutes before it went down, and the wind was stilled when Johnny Deason, with Nedder, Scotty, and Sue trailing his horse, rode in to camp.

Ella pushed the tent flaps aside, and the dogs pretty near bowled her over, greeting her. "Johnny Deason,

what have you done?" she demanded. "Did Mother let you have these dogs?"

"No," he said, and I got in: "Did the woman take a shot at you?"

"Yes," said Johnny. "Apparently she thinks this outfit worse than a pack of wolves; yet she couldn't quite bring herself to aim straight, and the boy sort of calmed her down. Ella, your brother has half a mind to make up with me."

"But you didn't get permission to take Nedder and Scotty and Sue?"

"No." Johnny dismounted and took a bundle from behind his saddle. "Soggy," he called, "I've got eggs and milk and a dressed chicken. See if you can fix something that Granny can eat. Where is he—still abed?"

He faced the girl again. "Ella, in this jungle one dog is worth more than four or five men," he explained. "I intend to dog our cattle out of the brush."

"Yet only yesterday," she said bitterly, "you were determined to keep the dogs away from the cattle. Then you said they'd stampede your herd; now you say—"

"This is a different situation. Now the dogs will work behind the cattle. Savy? Behind 'em!"



"Woof!" and held out a paw.

"Oh! But," she asked, her curiosity getting the best of her, "how did you manage to get them?"

"I started away as if I'd given up; then I whistled to Nedder, Scotty and Sue, and here we are. . . . Now, let's eat. Soggy, feed our new helpers. They've got better teeth than we have, so maybe they can chew some of this beef. Ella, won't you agree to our using Nedder, Scotty and Sue?"

"You'll use them, no matter what I say?"

"Yes."

"Cowboy, you make me so mad I could—I could— Can I go home, now the storm has stopped?"

Bill Frank and Nevada were getting a kick out of the clash between Johnny and the girl, and I saw Nevada wink at Bill as Johnny answered: "No. It'll be dark in ten minutes, and the wind may break loose again."

"No? Then tell me what you told Mother. She must be frantic, thinking of me in a cowboys' camp."

Johnny turned loose his tired horse and moved in on the cook's pots, carrying a plate and coffee cup. "I figured she would be frantic," he said slowly. "So—here's another black mark against me, Ella—I lied. I told her you had safely reached the first

ranch beyond your place. . . . Here's some grub. Cowpunchers can't eat this stuff unless starving, but maybe a girl can get hungry enough to eat almost anything."

"Dang you, Johnny!" exploded Soggy. "'Tain't my fault there ain't no canned stuff nor vegetables! I cook what the outfit gives me to cook. Account of we had a lady visitor, I done better tonight'n ever yet. Them sink—biscuits now—"

"These are really fit to eat," shouted Bill Frank, sampling one. "And Soggy's boiled the beef, instead of just scalding it. It's so tender you can pretty near stick a fork in the gravy."

Soggy beckoned to me. "I've put a raw egg in a cup of milk," he said. "See if Granny can down it."

I moved to where the old hand was bedded down, pulled back the tarp and covers. "Granny, wake up!"

His wrinkled, bewhiskered old face was the color of putty, yet a feeble moan told me he was alive. I leaped to my feet and called: "Ella! You know anything about doctorin' or nursin'?"

"A little bit. Why?" Instantly she pushed past me, knelt beside the bed, and felt for the pulse in Granny's shriveled wrist. "Have you anything to give him for a stimulant? He's—"

Granny mumbled: "Gotta get the herd through. Gotta keep 'em outa the brush, get 'em through, come hell or high water."

I looked at the girl. Her eyes were wide in her tense face. "'Get 'em through, come hell or high water,'" she echoed in a strange tone.

Granny's eyes came open. "Hello, Tap, old horse. . . . Sa-ay, I held up my end, didn't I? Didn't I?"

"You sure did, Granny. Now don't worrit—"

"I won't. Not any more. I—I'm goin' out like I always wanted to—holdin' up my end—and you boys, with Johnny—good hand, Johnny—and the dogs will get the herd through. Get 'em—"

A spasm gripped him. "Granny!" I called. No answer. Ella, her eyes wet, put the old fellow's hand on his chest, and then pulled down the eyelids over vacant, lifeless eyes. She rose to her feet and swayed against me. "Tap," she whispered, "I think—I know I understand better now. . . . 'Holdin' up my end. . . . Get the herd through.'"

I COULDN'T find the right words to answer her, but over her shoulder I said to Johnny: "We're short another man."

"I'll help do whatever's necessary," Ella said.

"Sit down on that other bed-roll, Ella," he said gruffly, to hide his own

deep emotion, "and close your eyes. . . . Another mound of earth beside a cattle trail; another old hand who'll never ride again." He picked up Granny's body.

Soggy's mustache quivered, as without a word, he got the shovel from the wagon. Nevada grabbed the shovel. "Where you want it dug, Johnny? . . . Bill!"—sharply, for Bill had turned sort of white—"get hold of yourself. You're to spell me with this job. . . . Tap, you'd better stay with the girl."

Johnny, Nevada, Bill and Soggy walked away and were lost in the rapidly gathering darkness. Ella's hand was tight on my shoulder. "Tap, are they—going to—bury him—here?"

I nodded. "Only thing we can do—and that's the way old Granny'd want it."

Minutes later a snatch of "The Cowboy's Lament" in Johnny's baritone voice floated to our ears:

Oh, beat the drum lowly and play
the life slowly,
And play the death march as they
carry me on.
Take me to some quiet valley, there
lay the sod o'er me—

Ella whispered: "Tap, if Nedder, Scotty and Sue will help you cowboys, I want you to use them. You tell Johnny—I'm going into the tent."

JOHNNY got some rest that night, and Nevada Red, without being asked, took over Poncho's night hawking so the game kid, too, could sleep. Nedder, Scotty and Sue shared Ella's tent.

'Twas a gray, still dawn, snow still falling fitfully, but no wind. When we saddled up, I took Nedder, Johnny took Sue, and Bill took Scotty, while Nevada Red waited outside the brush jungle to take charge of the cattle when they began to string out of it. Soggy and Poncho were moving the wagon and the cavvy to a noon camp at the spot where we'd try to bunch the herd.

Johnny had put Granny's saddle on Ella's horse for her to use and had told her she could now get home safely. Yet five hours later, when I got out of the brush, she was helping Nevada. From seven o'clock on, steers had been pouring out of the jungle. Nedder, Scotty and Sue were largely responsible for this. Dashing into scores of places where steers were hiding and a horse and rider could not go, those dogs did some mighty effective heel nipping. They turned the trick. They saved the day for us!

Mauling each one affectionately, Johnny told them what good fellows they were. But Nedder, Scotty and Sue were too tired to waggle their

tails. Johnny, Bill and I, who had been fighting brush, weren't tired? Nor were our saddle-horses? Oh, no! Those horses looked as if they had been squeezed through knotholes and dragged in a muddy river. Bill's and mine were badly lamed, to boot. The brush had pretty near ripped our already ragged clothing from our backs; it had torn our makeshift gunnysack overshoes from our boots, and Bill Frank's Angora chaps, except near the belt, had lost all of their hair.

Noticing that Ella was looking us over with interest, Johnny said, "The big steers didn't want to leave their shelter. It took man-and-dog teamwork to convince 'em they had to. And it was hard—on the cattle."

"Hard—on the cattle," repeated Ella. Her gaze shifted to the worn-out dogs, to Bill, to me, and then back to Johnny. "But so far as you're concerned, it was—"

"All in the day's work. . . . I'll ask Martin Sommers to add one hundred dollars to the bill he already owes you folks, Ella. . . . You'll take Nedder, Scotty and Sue home with you this afternoon?"

"I'm not going home," the girl returned. "Since you assured Mother I'm in no danger or trouble, I want to go on and meet Dad and help him get home."

I didn't say a word, yet I wondered, rather slyly, if this was the only reason she wanted to stay with the outfit!

Nevada Red, riding fast and popping his rope at the sullen steers in an attempt to start them moving in the right direction, came up and said crisply, "Break it up, boys. Get this herd rolling, or we'll have the job to do all over again."

He was right. Although the steers were now out in open country, they were almost knee-deep in snow, and their one idea was to return to the sheltering brush.

Johnny gave terse orders: "Tap, Bill, Ella, go to camp, grab a bite to eat and get fresh horses. Tap, saddle my mouse-colored pony for Ella, catch horses for me and Nevada, and then tell Poncho to throw the cavy in with the herd and give us a hand. Ella, take the dogs. Put them in the wagon box, so they can ride with Sam. . . . Nevada, did you get a tally on the critters? Many head short?"

NEVADA swung from the saddle and stepped toward the three dogs, resting in the snow with their tongues out. "Mutts," he said, "I'm the old buzzard who said all curs ought to be shot. Now, I'm doffin' my lid to you, the best bunch of helpers stumped cowpunchers ever had." He took off his hat and bowed. "Nedder, I'm

admittin' how wrong I was. Will you shake?"

As Nedder sat up and held out his paw, Bill Frank whispered to me, "You see, he didn't really hate dogs after all. . . . Lots of good in the old long-rider."

Nevada turned and doffed his hat to the girl, saying, "Boys, I couldn't have held these cattle out here without Miss Ella's help. She sure held up her end, too. . . . What was that, Johnny? You bet I tallied 'em. Only three short. Going to hold up the herd to try to get three missin' doggies?"

Johnny replied, "I'd like to get 'em so Martin Sommers couldn't hold losing 'em against us. But holding the herd anywhere near this brush trap is a chance we can't take. Not now."

He swung to saddle on his jaded horse, and abruptly gave the girl his attention once again. "Ella, have you got a veil?"

"No. . . . Why?"

"Your face isn't whiskered up like old Tap's, or mine, and already it's snowburned. Here," ripping a strip from the soft black lining of his ragged coat, "tie this across your nose just under your eyes. . . . Tap, Bill, rub charcoal under your eyes and tell Poncho to do the same. Going snow blind ain't funny."

He set his weary horse to work, and with popping ropes and lusty yells, he and Nevada whooped the rebelliously bawling, surly herd into motion again.

EXCEPT for the snow, the noon camp was not unpleasant. Bill and Ella and I sat on bed-rolls near Soggy's fire to eat dinner, and Bill took advantage of this opportunity to make a hit with the girl.

"Miss Ella, I wouldn't ever have treated you like Deason has."

Ella sipped coffee. "What would you have done if you'd been in Johnny's boots, Bill?"

"What you mean, 'in his boots'?" "Having on your shoulders the responsibility of delivering the trail herd. Would you have crossed our field against my mother's and Ted's and my wishes?"

"No. I'd have— Well, I'd have—"

Ella smiled at his confusion. "Rather than do that you'd have let Martin Sommers down, Bill? By the way, how much are those cattle worth?"

I spoke up. "At the current market price, roughly seventy thousand dollars for the bunch."

"And the owner isn't even with his stock," mused Ella. "He trusts a half dozen hired men with a fortune in steers."

"Ella," I said, "cowpunchers are something more than just hired men.

They consider 'emself part of the outfit. It's 'our' outfit, and so long as we work for it, we're loyal to it."

"Loyal?" said Ella. "Was Johnny Deason loyal to V Open A when he fought and whipped its foreman, Bern Holman?"

I GRINNED. "You figure that one out. But it seems to me like Johnny was loyal to something inside of him that was bigger and stronger than his loyalty to our foreman. Yet, at the same time, he was still loyal to the outfit itself. He's since proved it, ain't he?"

"Tap," snapped Bill Frank, "keep out of this. Like I was saying, Ella, I think you're great and I wouldn't have slapped you and been brutal, like—"

Ella made an impatient gesture. "Something more than just hired men?" she repeated thoughtfully, her eyes bright. "And they give everything they've got to their work. Often to a boss who doesn't care what happens to them and isn't worthy of loyalty. Even Poncho, who's only a boy, holds up his end. Soggy, too!"

"And me," said Bill Frank. "Gosh, I was tore wide open when Nevada said we'd ride out. But he didn't do it!"

I waggled my head, then jumped up to get a pair of light cotton blankets from Johnny's and my bed. While I was cutting them into six equal pieces, Bill's talk ran on: "You and me are 'bout of an age, Ella. After the cattle are loaded, I'd like to come back this way to see you, if—"

Her hands busy with tying the makeshift veil over her face, Ella interrupted, "You are more my idea of what a cowboy should look like and act like than any of these other men. They look like Eskimos—and an odder assortment I can't imagine."

"Yes'm," said Bill, pleased that he was apparently making progress. "But one of the funny old coots is left—Tap, I mean, and I bet you'll be s'prised to know you rode all forenoon helping an outlaw."

"Outlaw! Nevada's an outlaw? I—I guess I still don't understand cowboys." She turned to me. "Why did your outfit hire him? Why don't you report him to the sheriff?"

I hunched a shoulder. "We've had other men of Nevada's stamp lots of times, and we figure a man's past is none of our business so long as he shoots square with us. . . . Here are your new overshoes, Bill," tossing him two pieces of the blanket. "Hustle to tie 'em around your boots, and smear some charcoal under your eyes like I'm now doin'. . . . Soggy, here are blanket overshoes for Johnny when he comes to camp. Bill, Ella, let's go."

Camp that night was nine miles nearer Lockwood, for we whacked the steers along. They couldn't get any grass to eat, and we were eager to get them as far from Scrub Oak Brakes as possible. Every once in a while they'd throw up their heads and bawl and mill, determined to go back to the shelter they hadn't wanted to leave.

Soggy and Poncho pitched the tent and shoveled the space inside, free of snow, and then, because we needed all hands and the cook to hold the herd, yet could not have the dogs around when trying to get the critters bedded down, Ella volunteered to take over Soggy's job and thus keep Scotty, Nedder and Sue in camp. Poncho stayed with the cavvy as usual.

All our horses were stupid and lifeless; the storm ordeal and effort of pawing through snow for feed was wearing them out as much as the hard work. But the cattle were as mean as a buffalo herd. They would not settle down, and beating ten inches of snow into the ground with their hoofs they churned it to sticky mud.

Good old Granny wasn't there to help, so the five of us on herd had a double handful. Yet I managed to make a few pointed remarks to Johnny:

"Reckon this deal'll give you a bellyful of cowpunching."

"Why, Tap! This cold, storm-washed air is good. No gnats or mosquitoes or dust. Ain't you happy to be alive and punching cows?"

"I'd almost sooner be dead. Look, Johnny, while you're still young, quit this business. Get into somethin' with a future. If I was in your boots I'd stake a claim close to Leftwalter's."

"Why? What's being in my boots got to do with it?"

"Doggone! If you're that blind, I won't tell you."

A quarter hour before full darkness closed down, we saw a wagon drawn by a lone span of horses heave in sight from the east. We knew the man on the seat must be Leftwalter. His team would pull the wagon thirty feet, stop to rest, and do the same thing over again. Johnny signaled to me and we rode toward the man.

He lifted a rifle to his shoulder and hollered, "Keep your distance or I'll begin shootin'!"

We stopped, and Johnny called, "Better pull into our camp and hold up for the night, Mr. Leftwalter."

"Hole up with V Open A men? That'll be the last thing I'll do!"

"Take that chip off your shoulder, man. Bern Holman ain't here."

"I know he ain't. Met him yesterday. Allowed I'd kill him, but he

Illustrated by Benton Clark



This "long-rider" was a horseman and cowhand from who-laid-the-chunk.

wasn't armed. And he squared himself with me."

Johnny's eyes met mine. "Now why did Bern do that?"

Puzzled by this unexpected twist, I shook my head. But Leftwalter didn't keep us in suspense.

"Bern made peace with me by paying cash for the hay he burned. Then he said he'd stopped a cowpuncher named Deason from killing my dogs. But Deason and three others ganged up on Bern, almost killed him, and made him hike without a gun. After that, Deason defied my family, tore down my fence, took the cattle through my field. You fellows go back to your herd and tell that cuss I'm going to kill him or be killed."

I said low: "I've underestimated Bern. 'Twas clever of him to make Leftwalter believe he should kill you! Well, Leftwalter don't know who you are and I sure won't tell him."

"Come on, Tap!" Johnny prodded his horse forward.

Leftwalter yelled: "I'll shoot, I'll—"

Johnny paid no attention. Riding to the stalled team, he took his saddle rope and tied it to the end of the

wagon tongue. Leftwalter had his rifle trained on Johnny, yet the gangling, hawk-faced settler couldn't quite bring himself to squeeze the trigger.

I was so plain jittery I couldn't have tied my rope. But Johnny did it for me; and mounted and dallied his rope. "Okay, Mr. Leftwalter, start up your team."

Our saddle-horses dug in their hoofs and, disregarding Leftwalter's protests, we dragged the wagon into camp, where the dogs recognized the team and frisked and barked as if they hadn't just done a terrific day's work. The racket brought Ella out.

"Hello, Dad!"

The lines and the rifle dropped from Leftwalter's hands. "Ella! You been kidnaped?"

She laughed. "Don't be so startled, Dad. Though if kidnaping would help get a herd of cattle to its destination Johnny Deason would do it. . . . But stop worrying. I'm here of my own free will, and I'm the cook this evening."

"Listen, Ella, Bern Holman told me—"



Here came the wagon—Soggy-sinkers Sam handling the ribbons over his sturdy four-horse team and dreaming of

"A lot of lies, probably." The girl began to unhitch the jaded team. "Get down, Dad, and I'll tell you the truth."

Johnny had untied our ropes. He started away, me following. From the corner of an eye I saw Leftwalter climb down stiffly.

"Gosh, Ella," I heard him say, "I'm all in from fightin' the storm, tryin' to get home. If that young feller hadn't plain forced me to pull in here I'd have froze tonight."

I noticed that Johnny had a trace of a smile on his tired features. . . .

Maybe two hours later the steers became more quiet and began to lie down. I heard Johnny singing to 'em like he had done on the long beef roundup and then out on the trail:

Some nights it's not so bad, when the moon's a-shining clear,
And the cattle all are quietly sleeping to the biggest, meanest steer;
'Tis then you circle 'round the bed ground to an old-time puncher song,

And your two long hours of guarding don't seem half so long.

A mounted man loomed out of the night, coming toward me. "Hello? I'm Martin Sommers. Who're you?"

"Why, hello, Martin. I'm old Tap. Uh? Anybody with you, boss?"

"I'm alone, Tap. Tried to hire a dozen punchers in Lockwood. Couldn't get one. You see, I was so sure the herd'd be in the brush. Glory, I'm thankful to see the cattle are safe! They didn't get into those brakes, eh, Tap?"

"They sure enough did, Martin!"

The big boss was gazing toward the camp, four-hundred-odd yards away,



the booze he'd lap up in Lockwood.

where against the whiteness of snow the cook's fire brought out in sharp relief the chuck wagon and tent, and another wagon with a tarp pulled tight over its box. On a bed-roll close to the fire sat a girl and a man, and nearby three dogs were stretched out on a tarp.

"Tap," said the old man, "who're those strangers? And what in hell are dogs doing here with the outfit?"

I started to pour out my story, but Martin soon interrupted. "Johnny stopped Bern from killing Leftwalter's dogs? Why I've got more use

for a dry-gulcher than for a so-and-so who'd shoot a dog."

"Martin, did you ever get a bill from Leftwalter for a stack of hay Bern set on fire?"

"No. Explain this, Tap."

"Later on, boss. It's now clear that Bern got hold of that letter. He didn't want you to know what he'd been up to on his own hook."

"So? . . . On with your story about this deal, Tap. What happened next?"

I had just finished when Bill Frank rode up to us. "Tap!" he called. "You, Soggy and Nevada are to stay on guard, while Johnny and I grab a bite to eat at camp. Then, we'll come back and— Why, Mr. Sommers! . . . Where's Bern? Ain't he told you nothin'?"

"Regardless of all Bern told me, I slapped him with a pay check—for quitting his herd." The old man's words had a bite in them. "Now that Tap's told me what really did happen, I want to see Johnny."

"Ride to camp then," I said. "I see he's at the fire."

The old man pinched his chin while he looked toward the camp. Leftwalter, on his feet, was shaking Johnny's hand; then Ella brought Johnny a plate of grub and cup of coffee—and she sat down beside him!

"Leftwalter's made peace with Johnny," I remarked. "And did you notice that girl, Martin? You're going to lose Johnny."

"She still hates him," stated Bill Frank. "And why wouldn't she, when he was so damned rough on her?"

"Hates him?" I scoffed. "She wouldn't give a hoot for him if he hadn't done like he did. When Granny went out something happened to Ella; something that really got into her. She began to understand cowboys and the reasons they're like they are. What's more, her further experience with us has changed her notions about us."

STILL gazing at the campfire and seeing Johnny and Ella plainly by its light, Martin said, "As I understand this, it was really teamwork between my cowboys and—"

"Ella Leftwalter, Nedder, Scotty and Sue," I supplied when he paused.

"That saved a seventy-thousand-dollar herd for me. This, when Bern would have— I'm well rid of him! Now, how will the cross-pull between that girl and the range-foreman job work on Johnny? Can I have him or not? Lope to camp, Tap, and find out. I'll stand guard."

"Thanks, Martin," I said. "This is the pleasantest job I've had—ever."

He thought of something else. "Don't tell Johnny yet, but if he

makes good, I'll promote him to manager, with a home for his wife and himself, and full charge of V Open A. I'm going to retire in a couple of years."

"Manager!" I exclaimed. "How mistaken I've been, saying a man can never get anywhere punching cows!"

Bill Frank and I pointed our horses toward camp, while on the far side of the herd, a man with a mysterious, seldom-mentioned past, a man who almost never sang even on night herd, Nevada Red, began to sing.

My love is a rider and bronchos he breaks,

But he's given up riding and all for my sake; Tumdedumdum . . .

"Tap," spoke Bill Frank, "no matter what he's done, Nevada's a good scout. Yet he ain't the man Johnny is."

I reached over and shook his hand. "Bill, you're growing up!"

As my horse loomed in the firelight, Johnny said pointedly, "I was expecting you to stay on guard, Tap."

He was watching me, but I was watching Ella. Her eyes were on Johnny, something in them a man could see without halfway looking close, something that was neither defiance nor suspicion nor hostility, something which revealed admiration and trust.

"The big boss himself is pinch-hitting for me," I said. "I've given him an earful, Johnny, and you win the job: Range foreman on V Open A. Want it?"

Ab Leftwalter riveted his gaze on Johnny. Ella held her breath and her hands tightened, and Johnny came up to his feet. "Want it!" he said. Then something compelled him to turn his head toward the girl. Their eyes met, and silence ran along.

"Take it, Johnny, take it," she said, knowing with a woman's fine perception that this job was the goal for which he had worked, wanting it more than anything in the world—or almost more than anything.

"If I take it, Ella, I'll be pointing my saddle-horse your way every time I get a day off."

It was plain she was deeply moved, yet she laughed gayly. "Well, you made a hit with Scotty, Nedder and Sue," she teased. "They'll be looking for you—often."

I wheeled my horse back to the herd and reported to Martin Sommers. "You win, boss. But you'd best make plans to retire in less than two years. Johnny's a cowman, but no cowman as young as Johnny can hold out for very long against a pull that's stronger and more urgent than love of his range work and of his chuck-wagon home."

THE FAITHFUL
RECORD OF TWO
YOUNG ADVENTUR-
ERS WHO SET FORTH
IN A HOMEMADE
BOAT TO SEEK THEIR
FORTUNE FISHING
FOR SALMON OFF
ALASKA



The CRUISE of the



HE Customs officer appraised our papers thoughtfully, then raised his eyes to the two of us nervously fingering our rain hats before him.

"Ryan and Braddock aboard the *Maggie Murphy*!" he exclaimed. "If you boys are up here to go fishing, you've sailed seven hundred miles for nothing. Don't you know Alaskan fish only bite for Swedes?" he asked, breaking into a grin.

The officer carefully rolled up the papers and placed them in his lapel pocket, then addressed a woman typing at a nearby desk.

"I'm going down to inspect their boat," he said. "They might have some Irish whisky aboard."

His genial attitude relaxed Ed and me, and we grinned back at him. But we continued to stand respectfully at attention, and to wear our best air of innocence. While the officer apparently suspected nothing, the fact remained that we were two of the most inveterate violators of Customs law that had ever navigated the inside passage to Alaska, and we had much to hide.

For one thing, we had not reported to the Customs service immediately upon arriving in Ketchikan as we were required to do. We had been in town a good fifteen



By
**JOHN
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WOODWARD**

MAGGIE MURPHY

hours, during which time we had taken a sightseeing tour on foot, and enjoyed our first decent meal and peaceful sleep in thirteen days. The visit to the Customs office had come as sort of an afterthought when I found our Canadian clearance papers in a pocket while taking inventory of my dwindling supply of cash.

Furthermore, scarcely forty-eight hours had passed since we had been arrested in Prince Rupert, and charged with entering that city illegally. The penalty we faced was payment of a five-hundred-dollar fine, or confiscation of our boat. But we didn't have five hundred dollars, and the Canadians definitely didn't want

the *Maggie Murphy*. So they solved the problem neatly by escorting us to the boat and giving us four hours to put our show on the road.

The Customs officer rearranged the papers on his desk in neat piles, then sprang from his chair and vanished into a side room. In a twinkling he reappeared with a long black coat covering his portly frame, and a hat pulled down nearly to his ears.

"Come on," he said, as he strode briskly through the open door well in advance of us.

We emerged from the Federal Building onto the street, and started southward past the solid row of tawdry bars



Undoubtedly Charley noted that never had he found two more rapt listeners than Braddock and Ryan.

and restaurants that line the waterfront in the vicinity of Thomas Basin, Ketchikan's crowded small-boat harbor.

The official kept ahead of us all the way to the basin, walking in brisk, long strides with his head tilted back, and continually passing comments on the weather or the sights, then answering them himself without even pausing for a response from us. Ed and I trotted silently at his heels, our apprehension over the current entanglement with travel regulations mounting with each of the officer's four-foot strides.

When we arrived at the gangway leading down to the floats in the basin, the man stopped and allowed us to lead him down the steep incline, and out to the end of a float where the *Maggie Murphy* tossed restlessly with the Tongass Narrows swell.

"Right here, sir," I said, pointing to the boat at his feet.

When his gaze finally leveled on the *Maggie Murphy*, he lost interest in all else, and his eyes roamed over our little vessel, gulping in every shocking detail of its construction, from the square, boxy cabin that reeked of amateur workmanship, to the patched hull, and from the queer canoe-style stern, to the startlingly sharp lines of the knifelike prow.

"Did you come all the way from the States in this thing?" the officer asked.

"We left Tacoma the second of May," I assured him.

"It's people like you that keep the Coast Guard busy," the officer told me. "I wouldn't cross Tongass Narrows in this crackerbox, but it's none of my affair."

The Customs official stepped gingerly onto the deck of the *Maggie Murphy*, clutching the rigging as the boat heeled deeply under his weight. He was supposed to make a thorough inspection, but this didn't materialize. The moment he peered through the door into the confined interior, where there was a scant four feet of headroom, and where a greasy engine occupied about four-fifths of the floor space, he immediately decided the vessel harbored no liquor, furs, dope, jewelry or whatever else Customs officers seek.

He jumped back on the float and stuffed our clearance papers in his pocket with a gesture that indicated he had completed the investigation.

"I hope you boys aren't as broke as most of the migrants we get here," he said. "I don't think you can make a living fishing in this rig, and there's no one up-town who will help you. Our merchants can't afford to be staking every outsider that blows in here."

With that, he ended the conversation and stalked off.

A few drops of rain foretold that Ketchikan's brief dry spell was about to end, so we crawled into the cabin of the *Maggie Murphy*. Ed perched gloomily on the bunk with his knees against the engine, while I began distributing pots and pans beneath the well-memorized places where rainwater would soon be dripping through the ceiling.

Of gravest concern to us was the officer's statement that we could expect no aid from the merchants of Ketchikan. If this were to prove true, our trip was at an end. There was not sufficient fuel in the two oil-drums that served as gas-tanks for the *Maggie Murphy* to get us out of town; there was not a decent meal left in the food lockers; we didn't have nearly enough gear to commence fishing; and if the two of us were to turn our wallets inside out, we could not produce the sum total of ten dollars.

CHAPTER II

HIGH HOPES AT LOW TIDE



It is more than six hundred sea miles from Puget Sound to Alaska *via* the inside passage. The route follows tortuous channels and reef-studded sounds that are strewn with the bones of many an ill-fated vessel. Of course the ships that have come to grief in this well-traveled seaway comprise only a tiny fraction of the thousands that have passed through safely. Every summer literally hundreds of small pleasure and

fishing boats successfully brave the dangers of this passage. But surely the elements had never suffered a defeat more humiliating than when the *Maggie Murphy* sailed triumphantly into the Ketchikan harbor, just twelve days out of Tacoma, Washington.

With two amateur sailors at her Model A Ford steering wheel, she had conquered the swirling whirlpools of Seymour Narrows, the heaving ground-swell of shallow Queen Charlotte Sound, the choppy, reef-strewn waters of Chatham Sound, and nuzzled up to dock in her port of destination, salt-crusted but unbowed. The fact that her two skippers had no business in Ketchikan without funds or a workable plan for supporting themselves was no fault of hers.

To be truthful, neither Ed nor I was entirely to blame for the financial crisis that brought the *Maggie Murphy's* voyage northward to a halt in Ketchikan. We had plunged into the expedition in a very foolhardy manner, but we had an excellent scapegoat in an aged storekeeper back in Tacoma who had planted the whole idea for the trip in our defenseless young minds.

Old Charley, as he was called, operated a combined grocery store and gas station near our home community of Day Island, a misnamed peninsula jutting out into Puget Sound from Tacoma's west end. He was a bespectacled, bent old storekeeper in his upper sixties; but in the distant days of his youth he had spent one summer cruising the waters of southeastern Alaska in a fishing boat.

From these few months of travel, Charley had collected enough material for stories and anecdotes to last him through some forty years of continual telling and retelling. He liked nothing better than to have an audience of the younger generation of the neighborhood gather around his stove on winter nights while he spun tall yarns of Alaskan adventure. Undoubtedly Charley noted on more than one occasion that never in all his years had he found two more rapt listeners than Young Braddock and Young Ryan.

Long after the rest of the high-school fry of the neighborhood had got their fill of Charley's tales and deserted him, Ed and I would drop down to the store, toast our rears against the oil stove, and listen wide-eyed while the old storekeeper vividly described the time he had shot Seymour Narrows in the dark of night, caught ten big king salmon before breakfast, or fearlessly subdued a half-breed renegade.

Charley's words fell on eager ears, because they stirred up visions of an appealing, prosperous, adventure-filled life in Alaska.

Ed and I had grown up on the shores of Puget Sound amidst the distinctly Scandinavian seafaring flavor of this region. Our chums were the Andersons, Knudsens, Tollefsons and Larsens; and in the world that we knew, people piled slabs of *lutefisk* on their back porch and went to the Lutheran church on Sunday. Practically everyone who could afford any more than the common necessities of life owned a boat, and this was regarded as a sensible investment, because everyone knew that the only way a young man could get rich quick was to go fishing.

Ed was a very soft-spoken but sturdy youth who was forced to devote most of his after-school hours to cultivating the tomato plants and cleaning the chicken-coops on his parents' farm, overlooking the Sound. I lived right on the Day Island beach, and lacking tomato plants and chickens to occupy my attention, I spent a large part of my spare time rendering seaworthy a long line of rowboats and sailing craft that were resurrected from the surrounding tideflats. Needless to say, Ed managed to slip away from his duties on frequent occasions to join me in the latest boat-building project.

As it must to every school-goer, the day drew near when we were to graduate and launch into the world. Both of us wanted to take up an occupation that would keep us near boats and the water, but unfortunately no such opportunities were in sight. Of course we did our share of dreaming, and throughout high school we had a trip to the South Seas mapped and scheduled for the immediate future, notwithstanding the fact that we hadn't the slightest idea where a boat was to be obtained, or how we could support ourselves during the venture.

Our last year in high school was well under way when old Charley caught our ears with his tales, and began his insidious work. From the nights spent around his stove, there evolved in our minds a wonderful plan for a voyage to Alaska. We would outfit a small fishing boat, load our earthly possessions aboard, transfer residence to Alaska, and live a nomadic life afloat.

The life of a fisherman had always appealed to us, but we were acutely aware of the terrific expense connected with outfitting a suitable vessel. Furthermore, none of the fish-boat skippers in the area were in the market for greenhorn deckhands when there were plenty of experienced men available. But Charley told us about trolling in Alaska. In this type of fishing, only a hook and line is used, and the initial outlay is very small. "Why, even hand trollers with nothing but a skiff and line make twenty-five dollars a day during the season," he said.

Plans for the trip were discussed on the bus going to school, during study periods, and on hikes home. It was soon definitely determined that we were sailing for Alaska the day after graduation. We could see only two problems to overcome: 1. Obtaining a suitable boat; 2. Raising sufficient funds to get the trip started. After that—"You can get credit up there," Charley said. "The merchants will stake anyone who has a fishing boat."

FROM details furnished by Charley and facts gathered zealously from magazines and books on Alaska, the two of us visioned an idyllic existence in the Northland. We would be seafaring vagabonds, roaming the myriad channels and inlets of southeastern Alaska, calling any place home where we dropped our anchor.

In the summer and fall we could troll for salmon, and store up a stake of money to see us through the winter. When the snows began to fly we could seek some sheltered harbor, build a cabin of spruce logs and stock it with provisions, including venison dropped with our own rifles, and salmon smoked on the beach. Then we could hole-up for the long cold winter, and spend pleasant hours in complete relaxation while the snow piled up.

Of course we could add to our supply of money during the winter by hunting eagles, seals and wolves. Charley had told us there were five-dollar bounties on eagles and seals, and twenty-five-dollar bounties on wolves and coyotes. And neither of us doubted that some day while tramping through the woods we would stumble over a creek filled with nuggets.

When we set out to find our Alaska dream boat, we stayed scrupulously clear of marine marts and boatyards where fishing vessels were being offered for sale at prices ranging from two to ten thousand dollars. It was utterly impossible for us to raise any such sums of money, and so we combed the beaches and tideflats for a suitable derelict to claim and rebuild "a little at a time," as money and materials became available.

After two months of fruitless searching, we discovered a deserted hull in the mud of Hyblos waterway on the Tacoma tide-flats. The moment our eyes fell on its long narrow shape in the sticky ooze of the flats, we sensed that this was our boat, though from the average mariner's point of view, it was utterly worthless.

We copied the barely discernible number on the bow and checked it at the Federal Building to determine the



The moment our eyes fell on its long narrow shape we sensed that this was our boat.

legal registered owner. He turned out to be one Robert Dodd, the local commander of the Sea Scouts. This was a windfall of luck, for we were members in good standing of Sea Scout Ship 106, Day Island, and Mr. Dodd warmed up to us immediately. He gave us clear title to his discarded boat for the sum of one dollar. The submerged derelict was towed to Day Island by a borrowed motor skiff, and installed on a framework of timbers on the beach behind my home.

It took us sixteen months of tedious labor to complete the bare essentials of our dream boat. An incessant shortage of funds was the major source of delay. But it was resourcefulness, not money, that built our boat. For many a piece of lumber or item of equipment the *Maggie* gained, someone in the neighborhood suffered a corresponding loss.

ONE of the most expensive pieces of needed equipment was a brass propeller shaft. Our usual luck prevailed, and just as this need became acute a neighbor began scrapping an aged twenty-foot motor boat. While Ed and I watched him with a gaze he should have felt, he stripped all brass fixtures off the old boat and piled them carelessly in the brush. Then he burned the wooden remains. When we investigated the pile of brass scrap, we found a propeller shaft with stuffing boxes and bearings to match. We allotted the owner two weeks of grace to show proper interest in his scrap-pile, and during this period we guarded the equipment day and night lest someone hijack it. When the time elapsed and he did not appear, we carted off the shaft and bearings.

Several weeks later, the owner of the scrap pile appeared on the beach, and dropped over to our boat for a visit. Ed and I scarcely breathed while he inspected our work, including the shaft installation. But apparently he was merely curious, for he showed no indication that he recognized his former possessions.

The worst failing of our craft was its lopsidedness. Measurements showed that the boat was nearly four inches wider on one side than it was on the other, for the port side had become flattened during the years the old hull had been lying on this side in the mud. Ed and I set out to correct this failing with great determination; but pry as we might with timbers and jacks, we could never force the offending side out more than an inch or two. Finally we gave up trying, and thus doomed our

craft to go through the rest of its life with one side out-bulging the other, a weakness that caused it to float with a slight list to port unless compensated for with ballast.

In designing the cabin and pilothouse, we carried through a square motif. The cabin was a rectangular structure eleven feet long, six feet wide and sixteen inches high jutting stiffly up from the deck. Atop this was a tiny, almost square pilothouse that strongly resembled a miniature outhouse. It had three perfectly square windows cut in its face. Since we miscalculated our angles a bit while constructing the pilothouse, it leaned forward slightly, and the three big windows gave the impression that the ship had three eyes that were gazing downward with horror at its own incredibly ugly forequarters.

In the month of January, one year after she was resurrected from her muddy grave, the *Maggie Murphy* was christened and given to the sea. The launching was a nerve-racking experience for her two builders, for word of the event had spread all over the district, and there was scarcely standing room on the beach when the fateful hour arrived. The launching ceremony consisted of little more than stenciling the name—MAGGIE MURPHY—on the bow. This was the maiden name of my mother, and it was my intention to pay her great honor by naming our marine masterpiece after her. For reasons unknown to me, she received this honor with something less than enthusiasm. She deftly suggested that we postpone the formal christening until we were sure the "thing" as she called it, would float.

Everyone present at the ceremony fully expected to see the *Maggie Murphy* slide into the water and gurgle out of sight. We well knew that if such a thing happened, neither of us would ever live it down. But our fears proved baseless, for the actual launching proved to be the greatest triumph either Ed or I had ever known. The *Maggie Murphy* toppled into the lagoon, settled herself confidently on the water, then glowered disdainfully through her three big eyes at her stunned critics.

Of course our boat had to have a power plant, and obtaining one was our immediate post-launching problem. In a determined fund-raising drive, we gathered enough money to buy a complete automobile—a four-cylinder jalopy some seventeen years old. We removed the engine and were preparing to install it in the boat with minor alterations, when my father took it away from us and sent it to town to have it overhauled and

properly converted for marine use. He was beginning to believe we would actually get the *Maggie Murphy* into operation, and he was dismayed by our disregard for life and limb.

Two weeks after we drove the car in the yards, there was nothing left of it but a frame, four wheels and a gutted body. Every usable piece of equipment from the horn to the transmission, and from the light sockets to the vacuum tank, had been installed in the boat. We sliced up the inner tubes for use as gaskets, and we had the windshield cut into squares of glass that would fit the cabin windows. When the engine returned and was fitted on its bed, the *Maggie Murphy* was a hybrid best described as a boatmobile.

The little vessel first operated under her own power on March 17th, several days after we had surreptitiously removed a propeller from a little-used speedboat an uncle of mine had stored on the beach. On the *Maggie Murphy's* maiden cruise, the hot exhaust pipe started a fire where it came in contact with the cabin wall, and the tiller ropes persisted in snarling. But these were only minor details.

THE biggest battle of the entire project opened with the announcement of a sailing date. Our parents were vaguely aware of the strides we were making on the construction project, but when they came face to face with the possibility of our actually sailing, the four of them raised a well-coördinated howl. They flatly refused us any more money, and Ed was put back to work on the tomato vines under strict supervision.

But we howled too, and in the end they gave in. We were given thirty dollars apiece, but we were told it was strictly for a vacation trip, and the *Maggie Murphy* wasn't to leave Puget Sound. Apparently they asked relatives and friends to deter us from attempting a voyage to Alaska, for people suddenly began calling during working hours to warn us against the plan. Even old Charley got cold feet about the project he was so largely responsible for starting, and he sent word to us through chums that we "Couldn't live off the public in Alaska."

However, Ed and I hadn't the slightest intention of giving up—not with sixty dollars in our pockets. We rounded up an ancient compass, some charts, a life-preserver and a fire-extinguisher; then we filled our shelves with groceries. We also purchased two sacks of cement, and mixed several hundred pounds of concrete which we poured beneath the cabin floor to increase the boat's stability. The additional weight greatly lessened her dangerous tendency to roll.

By the afternoon of May 1, we had loaded aboard the *Maggie Murphy* every piece of usable junk we could lay our hands on, much of the lumber left over from the construction period, all our worn wood-working tools, several boxes of spare parts for the engine, and all our personal gear. We bid our parents good-by, and took advantage of their distraught condition to raise an additional ten dollars apiece.

Then the two of us returned to the *Maggie Murphy*, started the engine, and slipped away from the Day Island float with no more fanfare than the roar of exhaust and the swishing of the propeller wash. We traveled to the Tacoma waterfront, and put in at a marine service station to fill the gas tanks.

"Fill her up," I bravely told the attendant. "She'll take about one hundred gallons."

He lowered the nozzle; I placed in the fill pipe; and the gas began to pour. Suddenly a blast of the fluid shot out of the tank, striking full in my face, blinding me and drenching my clothing. I handed the hose to Ed and scrambled inside to dry my smarting eyes. When I returned, I found Ed also drenched, holding his face in his hands.

One of many flaws in the *Maggie Murphy's* design had come to light. There were no vents on the tank to allow air to escape while gas was entering. As a result, air pressure built up until it blew back out the fill-pipe and spread gas in all directions. It took more than an hour to fill the tanks by feeding the fuel slowly in short spurts; and even then, a few blow-backs were unavoidable. Ed and I became soaked with gas, the deck was covered with the fluid; and it dripped into the interior of the boat.

We put in at the Tacoma municipal float for the night, but neither of us could sleep. The stench of gas rising up from the bilge nauseated us, and our skins smarted and itched where gas-soaked clothes had rubbed.

At dawn we left the docks, and headed the *Maggie Murphy* northward up Puget Sound. With reddened eyes and heavy hearts the two of us watched the city of Tacoma drop slowly behind. We were under way on the second of May.

CHAPTER III

INNOCENTS ABROAD



HE *Maggie Murphy* churned northward on a mirror-like sea, as the rising sun sent tinted rays of gold across the wooded hills of Puget Sound. It was a perfect day, but unfortunately we were in a mood to enjoy neither the weather nor the scenery.

The commotion and clatter that accompanied our painful progress appalled us. The engine was rocking, vibrating and belching smoke; shafts and wheels were spinning crazily; and a symphony of ominous noises reverberated through the cabin. We watched the motor tensely, expecting at any minute to see it collapse into a heap of rubble under the strain of its labor.

Tacoma's modest skyscrapers had scarcely disappeared from view when two serious defects in our cherished boat began to plague us. First of all, the pilothouse proved to be utterly uninhabitable. It had about one-half less headroom than was needed to permit either of us to stand erect while steering; the engine was right underfoot, belching fumes and heat that rose up to smother the helmsman; furthermore, there was no danger that either fumes or heat would escape, because the windows had been nailed and puttied in place, sealing the pilothouse as tight as a mummy's crypt.

In our elaborate travel plan, the helmsman was to stand a two-hour shift, but we abandoned this idea in a hurry. As things turned out, steering aboard the *Maggie Murphy* was done in much the same manner as coal stokers operated in the boiler room of an oldtime steamer. One man would dash into the pilothouse, steer until the heat and cramped quarters became unbearable, and then scramble outside to revive himself while the other took over the steering wheel.

Far more serious than these discomforts of the pilothouse was the undeniable fact that our vessel was leaking. Somewhere in her aged hull was a chink that was admitting salt water to the inner sanctums of the bilge just about as fast as it could be bailed out. The boat had scarcely leaked before the voyage started, so we suspected that the leaking must somehow be connected with propulsion. During an inspection of the hold, we discovered water pouring through the rudder post, due to the fact that the *Maggie Murphy* sank much deeper at the stern, when loaded and under way, than we had calculated she would. Since the leak could not be stopped without large scale alterations on the rudder installation, there was nothing we could do but make up our minds to live with it. The leak meant that to keep the *Maggie Murphy's*

waterline below her belt, we must bail for at least fifteen minutes out of every hour spent in traveling north.

In spite of these shortcomings, we began to gain confidence in our boat as it became apparent that the engine was not giving off heat and fumes in deadly doses, and that the hull was obligated, by Archimedes' law of displacement, to float as long as we bailed.

GETTING out of Puget Sound proved to be a simple matter, since the broad passages marked by cities, ferry landings and other unmistakable landmarks make navigation no problem at all. But as the *Maggie Murphy* chewed away at this first hundred miles of the trip, the dangers that lay immediately ahead of us preyed heavily on our minds. We faced a voyage of nearly seven hundred miles that had proved too much for many a vessel with a stronger grip on life than the *Maggie Murphy*, and for many a navigator of far greater skill than either Captains Braddock or Ryan.

At the northern end of Puget Sound we had to cross the fourteen-mile-wide, tide-swept Straits of Juan de Fuca, where an engine failure could leave us helplessly drifting out to sea, beyond sight of rescuers. Just two hundred miles north of Tacoma our boat had to negotiate the Straits of Georgia, a body of water some thirty miles wide and one hundred fifty miles long, noted for its choppy seas, strong winds and ship disasters. We had to cross Queen Charlotte Sound, where the *Maggie Murphy* would face forty-five miles of open ocean. Also in our path was Milbank Sound, where the "inside passage" goes outside for another twelve miles, and Chatham Sound, a broad arm of the sea notorious for tide-rips and heavy swell.

After a stopover of one night in the northern Puget Sound city of Port Townsend, we started a dangerous crossing of the Straits of Juan de Fuca in a heavy rain storm. The moment the Olympic Peninsula was swallowed up in the gloomy mist, and we found ourselves alone in a world of angry-looking gray waves, we were terrified. Our hearts beat in unison with the motor, and if it had missed one putt during the crossing, we would have collapsed instantly. The compass course I laid out indicated that the San Juan Islands would show up slightly off our starboard bow at the end of three hours of travel. When this prescribed run was completed, and no land was visible anywhere, we became so panicky that only the lack of a lifeboat prevented us from abandoning ship. For another hour the *Maggie Murphy* proceeded cautiously through the gloom while we flattened our noses against the cabin window in a ceaseless vigil for a sight of shore. Still no land ahead. At last I went out on deck—and was nearly knocked over by the islands, which were in plain sight in clearing weather behind us, where they had apparently been showing for some time. For this blunder in navigation we blamed our aged compass, and I threw it in the potato locker lest the inaccurate thing cause our complete destruction later in the voyage.

The engine's valiant labor drove us northward relentlessly, along the bleak seaward side of the San Juan group where only an occasional stunted tree or herd of sheep broke the monotony of the bald hills, through the sheltered passages of the Tricomali Islands of British Columbia, where tiny cottages and expensive summer estates of rich Canadians dotted the wooded shores, finally to the little city of Nanaimo, B. C., for a night's rest, and then out on the broad reaches of the Straits of Georgia, another danger point of the journey.

The Straits were such a big body of water they did appear potentially dangerous, but a dead calm sea prevailed until afternoon, when we approached Cape Mudge, a low finger of land capped by a huge lighthouse, which marks the northern end of this inland sea between Van-

couver Island and the mainland. Here we proceeded with caution, for we had been warned about this place by every inside-passage expert that had ladled us advice. At Cape Mudge the swift currents of Seymour Narrows meet the tidal current of the Straits and form a tide-rip several miles in diameter that is fraught with danger for small craft. Truthful fishermen had told us that when a southeasterly wind rolls waves the length of the Straits of Georgia and flings them into this rip, a sea is created in which no small boat can exist.

Even in calm weather, passing through the rip was nerve-racking. The *Maggie Murphy* twisted eerily in troubled water that boiled and seethed as if a hot stove lay beneath the surface. After passing the cape, we entered Discovery Passage, rounded a bend in the channel and came face to face with a narrow gorge that looked like a doorway carved in the stony hills. A strong current was pouring through the gorge, accompanied by the same swirls and whirlpools that accompany the flow of water down a bathtub drain. This was dreaded Seymour Narrows.

THE Narrows are considered safe for passage at no time other than the slack periods between the change of tides. The current was now flowing swiftly, night was falling, and the gorge looked like the devil's private entrance to hell. Prudence dictated that we anchor, and pass through in the morning. Unfortunately, Prudence wasn't steering the *Maggie Murphy* this evening, and the little boat edged closer to the maelstrom until suddenly the swift current sucked her in, and there was no turning back. While we clung to the cabin walls in terror, the *Maggie Murphy* negotiated the passage on her own, first traveling sidewise, and finally, to our immense consternation, straight backward while the engine was operating full speed ahead. With one last convulsive twist, the current dumped us into the broader waters of Discovery Passage again, and abandoned us to our confusion.

We had scarcely time to collect ourselves when night fell with a thud between the stony walls of the Passage, a brisk wind sprang up, the *Maggie Murphy* began to pitch violently and her two skippers were at this point willing to trade her, lock, stock and bailing bucket, for their beds back home in Tacoma. And at this awkward moment, a most disconcerting phenomenon took place in our cabin.

First the engine began to miss, and on gazing down at it, we beheld a solid stream of water pouring up from beneath the transmission and splashing against the ceiling. A leak was a leak, but there was no accounting for this terrifying artesian well. A frenzied inspection revealed that we had forgotten to bail the bilge at the last hourly interval, and water had risen so high the spinning engine flywheel was dipping in it and throwing the greasy fluid against the cabin ceiling and walls. Ed bailed wildly while I steered a zigzag course up the channel in the inky darkness, being alternately frightened rigid by one stony wall and then the other.

By now the two of us knew only one consuming desire—to get into a sheltered harbor for the night. After proceeding about ten miserable miles we sighted a logging camp whose lights were silhouetting a small-boat mooring area, jammed with Canadian gill-net craft enjoying the shelter of a narrow chink in the walls of Johnstone Straits. Although there didn't appear to be space for us in the place, we nosed grimly into dock, determined that if there weren't room for another boat here, someone else would have to leave.

Shortly after our arrival a young Canadian of our age boarded the *Maggie Murphy* and bade us welcome to the Bear River Logging Camp. He told us he was the operator of the camp mail-boat, and each week he journeyed down through Seymour Narrows to Campbell River for

camp supplies and letters, but the remainder of the time he was free to fish in the many channels and passages in this area. It seemed like a romantic life to us, but he professed to be "fed up to the bloody gills" with life in a small boat.

EARLY the next morning, we resumed our voyage down Johnstone Straits, which appeared to us to be a yachtsman's paradise. The channel walls rose abruptly from the water, then sloped back to lofty hills that were densely forested with spruce trees and pockmarked by the activities of logging camps. Mysterious-looking harbors and passages cut off from the main channel and augered as deep into the mountain fringe as the eye could see.

That night we docked in the Indian village of Alert Bay at the southwestern approach to dangerous Queen Charlotte Sound. The village was a distinct disappointment to us, for the Indians were walking the plank main street in business suits; the shops were modern; and there wasn't a tepee in sight. The only touch of native color was a prominent burial ground, where each grave was marked with a totem pole; but the poles were just cedar boards on which faces were painted rather than carved.

Ed and I questioned the marine gas-station attendant regarding the proper method of crossing Queen Charlotte Sound.

"Remember one thing. Get across before noon," he said. "In the mornings the Sound is usually calm, but in the afternoon the northwest wind comes up, and it usually gets too bumpy for a little boat out there."

We wasted the sixth day of the voyage on a three-hour trip out to Cascade harbor on Nigei Island, the last outpost on the southern end of the Sound. Our departure on the forty-five-mile ocean crossing was scheduled for dawn the following morning, but when the zero hour arrived, a thick fog held us in the harbor. By noon, when it was too late to cross, the fog had lifted and the weather was perfect. Neither of us could bear to waste another day at anchor, and so, a little after noon, we put out to sea and headed the *Maggie Murphy* northward across Queen Charlotte Sound in direct violation of all we had been told.

In an hour we were creeping by Pine Island, and the weather was still perfect. Three hours later we were riding a gentle ocean swell off tiny Egg Island, hugging close to its rocky, precipitous walls, where a huge lighthouse stared down at us. To the shoreward we could see the swell smashing up on the shores of Cape Caution. To the seaward there was nothing but water and the horizon. Ahead loomed stony Cape Calvert, our destination, still eleven long miles away.

Egg Island had scarcely fallen behind when a faint wisp of wind blew out of the northwest, sending tiny furrows over the surface of the sea and chills up and down our spines. The breeze freshened rapidly, and with appalling suddenness the *Maggie Murphy* was battling doggedly against a howling, spray-laden wind in the very shadow of Cape Calvert, which appeared close enough to lasso with the anchor rope.

Toward evening the wind broke loose with all its fury, and Ed and I stood terrified in the pilothouse while waves piling over the bow snatched boards from our deckload. But if Davy Jones had designs on the *Maggie Murphy*, he had waited too long before summoning the elements to his aid. Near nightfall, the valiant little boat slogged into the shelter of Cape Calvert, and a half-hour later we were snugly anchored in Safety Cove, shaking with relief. Queen Charlotte Sound had been conquered!

Now we were halfway to Ketchikan, but the journey was inflicting miseries on us that we had never dreamed of before sailing. We were goggle-eyed from lack of rest,

since the big platform in the bow of the boat that served as a double bunk for our sleeping bags had proved to be the most uncomfortable sleeping pedestal ever devised by man. It was built on a slight incline which forced us to sleep with our heads lower than our feet. What was worse, it narrowed to a sharp point, and we were forced to rest with our four feet piled atop each other.

Since leaving Tacoma we hadn't managed to warm even a can of soup on our camp stove. Each morning it dribbled gasoline all over its chin, then burst into flames two feet high when the match was applied. This called for vigorous action with the fire extinguisher. When we did succeed in starting it, the contraption would give off almost as many fumes as the engine, but nowhere near as much heat. The stove finally drove us to discovering the only convenient method of cooking in the boat. When the engine was running, we merely placed a can of beans on the exhaust manifold, and within an hour the meal was piping hot and ready to serve.

For two days after our departure from sheltered Safety Cove, the journey was eventless to the point of monotony. Hour after hour we alternated steering with making peanut-butter sandwiches while the *Maggie Murphy* crawled the length of Lama Passage, Finlayson and Grenville channels. It was like traveling through a scenic tunnel, since we were walled in on each side and low hanging clouds formed a perfect roof over our heads.

The *Maggie Murphy* arrived in Prince Rupert, the metropolis of northern British Columbia, on Sunday, May 13. The very sight of this prosperous city of some ten thousand souls, spread over the hillside above the inlet, was a tonic for our wilderness-weary eyes. We could barely spare the time to dock the *Maggie Murphy* properly before rushing uptown to reacquaint ourselves with the ways of civilization.

With a ten-day growth of whiskers on our faces, dirt crusted to our clothes, our shoes splitting at the seams from repeated immersions in salt water, and two big mariner's rain-hats on our heads, we tramped the length of the city's main streets, causing a mild outbreak of raised eyebrows and craned necks wherever we went. We found dozens of modern shops, a score of restaurants, hotels and bars, and at least one hundred taxicabs in this bustling port and rail terminus on the northern coast. We also found two alert Customs officers—or rather they found us.

WHEN we returned to the *Maggie Murphy* at the city floats, we found a taxicab parked at the head of the gangway, and three men the cab had disgorged, making an intense study of our boat. We tried to ignore them and go aboard, but one of them stopped us.

"Is this yours?" he said, jerking his thumb at the *Maggie Murphy* in a disrespectful manner.

"Yes," I replied.

"Well, you'd better take a ride uptown with us," he said, showing a badge under his overcoat.

Now the men had not identified themselves, but our consciences were sufficiently guilty to permit us to guess their line of business.

"Customs officers," I whispered to Ed as we walked up to the cab, and he nodded his agreement.

The car delivered us to a house on the outskirts of town, where an elderly official pulled up a card table and held court. Presumably, the office downtown was closed, and this was customary Sunday procedure.

By questioning us in a thick Scotch brogue, the officer dragged out a complete confession regarding our amazing disregard for Customs laws. At first he was indignant; then he sputtered; finally, to our amazement, he broke out laughing.

The old Scot was authorized by law to fine us five hundred dollars or confiscate our boat. The official

showed a desire to penalize us, but we blocked him at every turn. We were broke; our boat was worthless; and we were minors. Furthermore, I informed him that if they intended to imprison us, they would have to station an officer on the *Maggie Murphy* to take care of bailing chores, or the boat would sink to its eyebrows in no time at all. The Customs Chief finally settled for the \$2.50 Sunday registration fee, and the taxi fare, then made out our clearance papers and dated them for Sunday. This apparently meant we were to be out of town by midnight.

The two arresting officers elected to stay at the house. Riding back with the cab-driver, we discovered it was he who had summoned the officials and caused our arrest. "I knew your boat was from the States, so I picked up the officers just for the fares," he said. "There's more than sixty cabs in this town, and a man has to use his head to make a living."

We didn't leave Prince Rupert until about six o'clock Monday morning, primarily because nothing could have induced us to start across Chatham Sound in the dark. When daylight came, we got underway, determined to complete the last ninety miles of this voyage before the sun set. The vessel was sadly in need of repairs, but we still entertained a conviction that once we reached Alaska, all our miseries would vanish, and so it was Ketchikan today or bust.

The *Maggie Murphy* scraped on a rock in foul Metlakatla Passage, but we didn't even stop to determine the extent of damage. A heavy swell disturbed the surface of Chatham Sound, but we plunged into it, and drove on relentlessly. At the lonely Dundas Islands in mid-sound, the exhaust pipe suddenly cracked and permitted deadly fumes to escape in the cabin, but we merely abandoned the pilothouse, moved back into the hole, and steered by yanking tiller ropes and craning our necks around the cabin structure.

As night fell, and the *Maggie Murphy* nosed toward the gatelike entrance to Tongass Narrows with her destination due to show any moment, a great air of expectancy fell over the boat. We ceased talking, and Ed took up a station on the bow and peered intently through the gloom. After an hour's vigil he suddenly roared: "Ketchikan ahead!"

I caught sight of two lights. Soon another hove into view, then another, and finally the entire east side of the Narrows was a glorious mass of brilliant light.

We made our way behind the Thomas Basin breakwater with Ed still perched on the bow, and me peering out of the hold like a wrathful spirit. With difficulty I brought the boat into an empty stall. Then four eager hands clutched at the dock.

Ketchikan! Dispenser of riches! Glorious metropolis of the Promised Land! The journey's end! We could barely suppress a desire to kiss the dock.

CHAPTER IV

YES, WE HAVE NO BONANZAS



O a couple of enthusiastic Cheechakos who expected to sluice gold nuggets from the town's rainbarrels, Ketchikan proved a tolerable disappointment.

The place had an adventurous, seafaring flavor, an air of hard work and mild prosperity, but none of the symptoms of a boom town. In the course of a sight-seeing tour conducted on foot, we soon deduced that the town wasn't growin', the money wasn't flowin', and the boys weren't throwin' it around.

Since we were totally out of gas, almost out of food, and completely lacking in fishing gear, we asked noth-

ing more of this picturesque city than about three hundred dollars' worth of credit from its merchants. Old Charley, and other Puget Sounders, had led us to believe that getting a stake in Ketchikan would be no more trouble than acquiring a boatful of fresh air. But after we had spent one day soaking up the atmosphere of the town, our extravagant dreams of Alaskan prosperity spiraled to a crash landing.

For two days we circulated among the fishermen, and pounded the streets, vaguely searching for a familiar face, or a newfound friend that would show us how to get on in this strange city. But every time we confessed to an Alaskan that we were broke, he would desert us. No one wanted any part of our friendship after it dawned on him that we were two more of the numberless greenhorns that swarm into Ketchikan each spring expecting to vacuum-clean gold-dust from the city's gutters, or corner the salmon market with a fishing-pole.

Our spirits were about even with our shoe-tops on the third day in town when we stumbled on a chink in Ketchikan's wall of inhospitality. The two of us were wandering aimlessly among a group of ungainly purse seine boats when a voice suddenly boomed: "H-e-y, Tacoma!"

WE wheeled around and looked right into a familiar face! The caller was Al Bergeson, a former acquaintance of ours whom we hadn't seen nor thought of for more than five years. Good old Al, the tall, dark complexioned fellow who had once been a sophisticated big kid in our Day Island gang. We swarmed over him with enthusiastic overtures, then let down our hair and poured out a tale of woe.

"It's a tough proposition," he said. "If you can get gas, someone will give you fishing gear. Or if you can get fishing gear, one of the oil docks will give you gas. But if you can't get nothing, no one will give you nothing," he explained.

"There's a new manager down at Union Oil named Hansen. A guy named Rasmussen used to be the boss, but Hansen just took over, and I think Rasmussen left this week. Go down and tell Hansen that Rasmussen was a good friend of yours, and he gave you credit last year. They never look it up, and you'll get your gas. When your boat is gassed up and ready to go, any outfitter will take a chance on you for the fishing gear. If that doesn't work, let me know."

However dubious it sounded, Eddie's plan of attack deserved a try, and so the following morning I once again donned my best clothes and set out for the oil dock. When I arrived at the Union Oil Company's office, I found several typists and a man who was obviously Mr. Hansen, the new manager, behind the counter. So I blurted right into a well-rehearsed plea for gas, and I lied by saying that Rasmussen had extended us credit last year in a tone of voice that intimated that Rasmussen and I were old friends.

"I'm sorry," the man said, eying me sharply, "but Mr. Hansen is manager now, and he's the only person that can extend credit. I'm Rasmussen," he added.

This development left me speechless, and I could feel my face turning livid. Mumbling that I would wait, I beat a hasty retreat from the office, and seated myself on the dock pilging. Were it not for the fact that all eyes were watching me from the window, I would have fled the dock.

Each time a well-dressed person entered the office, I would follow him in, thinking him to be Hansen. But each time it proved to be a customer, and Rasmussen would wave me back. The girls stared at me with unconcealed curiosity, and I was in utter misery.

Hansen finally appeared, and I launched into my plea for credit. Being completely fed up with all forms of

deceit, I told a straightforward truthful story. The manager listened respectfully, although Rasmussen and the girls were eavesdropping with very skeptical expressions on their faces. Mr. Hansen, a heavy-set business executive, was obviously not disposed to hand out gas without receiving payment, but he seemed to have one characteristic that was in my favor, and that was strong admiration for private initiative.

"If you boys have made it this far, I'd like to help you out," he said. "But there's one condition: I have already extended more credit than the head office allows, and you'll have to pay the bill before the first of the month, so I won't have to send your account into Seattle headquarters."

I hadn't the slightest idea when we could pay him back, but I readily agreed to the proposal.

"All right," he said; "bring your boat down and we'll fill it up."

Exuberant over this success, I raced down the waterfront until a sign reading HENRY ERWICK, TROLLERS' SUPPLIES, caught my eye. The proprietor was standing against a stove inside; he was alone, and so I entered and once again made a scrupulously truthful plea for credit, emphasizing the fact that I had a boat and plenty of gas.

"What-all do you need?" he asked.

"A set of gurdies and a complete outfit of trolling gear," I told him.

"You haven't got gurdies?" he asked, raising both eyebrows.

This was a point against me. Gurdies are mechanical contraptions that haul in and lower stainless steel trolling line with power supplied by an engine. Every *bona fide* salmon trolling boat is equipped with them when it is built.

After this exchange of words, Mr. Erwick was silent for a long period of time, while he stood, back to the stove, and stared out on the street through the large store windows. Finally he gave in. His actual words were: "All right, do you want it now or later?" But his tone of voice and manner seemed to say: "Well, everybody else in town is on my books, you might as well be."

Al Bergeson and Ed were working on the cracked exhaust pipe when I returned to the *Maggie Murphy*, and at first neither of them would believe my success story. When I convinced them that this was no joke, Al grew very serious, and pointed a finger that backed us against the wall.

"Whatever you do, don't take this boat down to the oil dock in daylight," he ordered. "Wait until just before they close at ten o'clock, when it's twilight. If Hansen gets a good look at this rig, he may back out on the deal. Don't let Erwick see it, either."

AL's advice was followed closely. We went down to the Union Dock at nightfall, and since the manager had set no limit on our credit, we filled both tanks, two five gallon drums, and an empty water cask. When we dropped in at Henry Erwick's to pick up our fishing gear, he offered to drive it down to the boat, but we firmly declined, and said we could manage ourselves, thanks.

When the smoke of this credit battle cleared we owed Union Oil about twenty-five dollars and Henry Erwick something in the vicinity of three hundred dollars. These sums totaled more than the estimated value of the *Maggie Murphy*.

Our efforts to charge groceries ended in dismal failure. I tried several stores, but there were always a number of people shopping, and when the clerk would turn to me I would lose my nerve, buy a dime's worth of something, and leave. Al said this was a hopeless cause, since grocers were a hard-headed lot, so we made up our minds to take a hitch in our belts and live on short rations until the fishing money began to roll in.

There were rumors along the waterfront that salmon were running in the Meyers Chuck area, some sixty miles to the north, so on May 17, we resumed travel.

CHAPTER V

WHERE MANY ENTER BUT FEW RETURN



EVERYONE has heard tales of men who went north to Alaska in search of gold and struck it rich. But scattered around the isolated valleys, hills and harbors of the Territory are hundreds of men who drifted north in search of the yellow metal and didn't strike it rich.

Most of the men who "got 'er made" have long since disappeared from Alaska's scenic landscapes. But many of the men who missed their riches are still in the Territory. Some of them are living in lonely cabins deep in the interior, where their feverish digging for gold failed to pan out. Others have gathered in tiny communities where a salmon run, caribou trail, or a gold-bearing stream makes living a simple matter. Such a community was Meyers Chuck.

The *Maggie Murphy* poked her nose into Meyers Chuck harbor at noon of the second day out of Ketchikan. The trip should have taken about six hours, but a brisk southeaster blowing on Clarence Straits forced us to shelter for a night, and additional time was wasted in an exasperating search for the place. The harbor entrance was a narrow slot in a sea wall of jagged rocks; and when we finally found the passageway, it seemed incredible that this hole in the wall in a bleak and isolated part of Alaska could be inhabited.

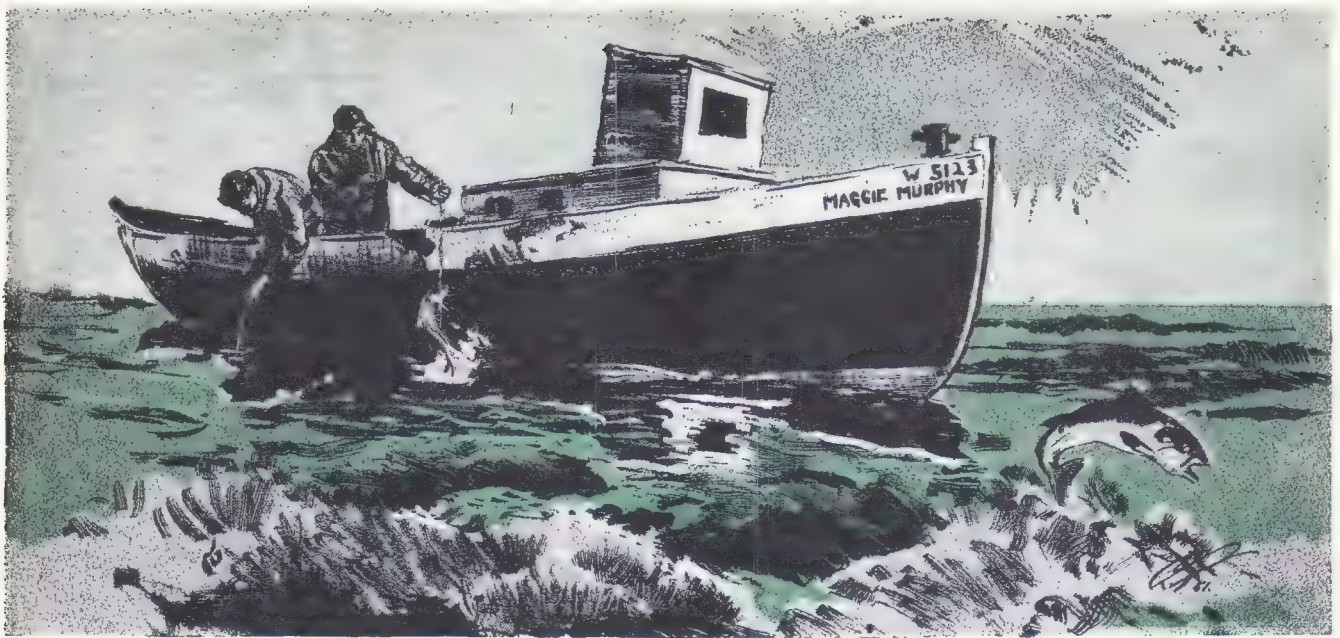
As we picked our way through the rocky entrance, a tiny inlet almost completely enclosed by steep, wooded hills opened up before us. On the hillside at the head of the harbor was a patchwork of clearings and perched on these clearings were cabins and huts built of driftwood and spruce logs. The main street of the village was a broad footpath flanking the beach at the base of the hill, and here the cabins were clustered side to side. The path led to a wooden general store that rested on stilts above the waterfront, and a rampway descended from the store to a rickety float that comprised the village's sole dock.

"There ain't room for you here," shouted a shabbily dressed idler as we pulled up to the vacant float. "The boats will be coming in at dark," he added, and motioned for us to tie up at the very head of the dock where the *Maggie Murphy's* bow was sure to rest on mud at low tide.

"The boats" were apparently in a hurry to get home that day, for they started coming in long before dark. We had just docked when a tiny open motor skiff rounded the reefs and puffed up to the float.

Almost simultaneously with the small boat's arrival at dock, a stocky middle-aged woman emerged from the store, stalked down the ramp out to the float, and pulled a canvas off a set of scales. The grizzled pilot of the boat threw three of the biggest salmon we had ever seen on these scales. The storekeeper's wife weighed them, and stoically paid him with money she warily produced from under her apron.

Throughout the afternoon the boats popped into the harbor at steadily shortening intervals to sell their fish. Finally, about six in the evening, a veritable parade of small fishing vessels nosed slowly through the reefs at the entrance. There were open motor skiffs powered with noisy one-cylinder engines, launches with ill-fitting cabins, scores of rowboats, and a few well-maintained fishing boats of conventional design.



Early in the evening our lines suddenly jiggled wildly, and pandemonium reigned on the Maggie Murphy.

The skipper of each boat sold when it was his turn, and the woman paid him in cash in most cases. However, at times, when the weighing was done, she would plant her hands firmly over her apron front and question: "Shall I take it off your bill?" in a manner that just dared him to say no. Invariably, the crushed fisherman would answer, "Yes," and edge silently away from the scales.

After watching the lady storekeeper buy fish, we realized that her most important task was to determine if the salmon were "reds" or "whites." The vast majority of king salmon that ascend Alaska rivers have pale pink flesh; but for some inexplicable reason, just a few have pure white meat throughout their bodies. The average American housewife won't purchase a salmon steak that isn't reddish in color, and so fish buyers pay only a fraction of the cash for a white king that they do for a red king salmon.

Since salmon caught by Alaskan trollers are cleaned by the fisherman, he knows well the color of each fish. But the woman accepted no man's word. She would carefully pull open the belly of each salmon and inspect it.

"I said it was a red," protested one fisherman. "Don't you trust me?"

"I don't trust no one since Olaf painted the whites with mercurochrome!" she snapped back.

On finding that the average boatman sold from ten to twenty-five dollars' worth of fish after his day's work, we fairly chafed to start fishing. The two of us immediately set out to make friends of as many of these Meyers Chuck sourdoughs as possible, and learn from them how to rig up our fishing gear, and catch salmon.

That evening, when the deep twilight of the Alaska summer night set in, and the fishermen gathered in front of the general store to swap tales of the day's experiences, Ed and I became acquainted with most of the residents of "the Chuck." None of them seemed to have last names; they all boasted nicknames that usually consisted of their first name plus some identifying characteristic. For instance, we met Hardluck Ole and Little Ole, No Fish Hans and Silent Hans, Bald John and John on the Signe. These nicknames served to identify fishermen quickly and positively in a predominantly Scandinavian country, where there are many Ole Olesons, Johnny Johnsons and Hans Hansens.

The harbor was divided between fishermen who were "power-boatin'" and the men who were taking their salmon lures through the water purely by oar power. It was apparent that owning a motorboat put a man in the upper crust of local society.

We talked briefly to one fur-hatted individual who was busily engaged in bailing out a dilapidated skiff. He seemed eager for us to take note of a newly installed one-cylinder motor resting on a frame of fresh boards amidships. When neither Ed nor I mentioned this new addition to his boat, he was forced to conclude a conversation about fishing prospects with the statement: "Things have been a lot different for me this year. You know I'm a power-boatin' now."

It took us four full days to rig up our fishing gear, and it would have taken longer if it weren't for a kindly resident of the harbor known only as Lonesome Pete. Lonesome was a tall, well-educated middle-aged Scandinavian who appeared on the float each morning in a heavy gray wool outfit topped off with a battered sun visor.

He lived in a spacious spruce log cabin on the hillside, and fished in a small launch propelled by a two-cylinder motor which he had ingeniously tailored for his little boat by cutting a larger automobile motor in half. Like everyone else in Meyers Chuck, he made his yearly stake during the fishing season, then withdrew to his cabin to spend a pleasant winter listening to his radio, playing cards or swapping tales with his neighbors.

For some reason, Lonesome took pity on us, and acquired a feeling that he was duty bound to help us out. Under his expert guidance we chopped four long cedar saplings and mounted them on deck to serve as trolling poles. He also showed us how to rig the vast conglomeration of fishing gear Henry Erwick had charged to us. Each morning before Lonesome went out to fish, he would stop by our boat and lay out the day's work. When he came in at night, he would inspect our progress, pass comment, and occasionally condemn a particular job and advise us to do it over again. Since everyone knew we were Cheechakos, the fishermen of the harbor watched our work closely, and passed advice liberally. But no one would contradict Lonesome's orders, so we took it he was a respected authority and followed his advice only.

Hunger plagued us constantly as we worked on the gear, for the *Maggie Murphy's* larder was all but empty, and we did not have enough money to provision it. The two of us adopted a steady diet of candy bars and pastry purchased from the general store. "You boys must be living on candy," the lady storekeeper said to us one morning. We were ashamed to confirm her suspicion but she was so right.

The general store was the very foundation of the harbor's economic structure. Every resident converted his salmon to cash at the store, accepting a price two cents per pound less than the prevailing scale being paid by the Ketchikan Cold Storage. This two-cent deduction constituted the store owner's margin of profit for handling the fish. When the store's "packing" boat went to town to re-sell the salmon at Ketchikan, it loaded up with supplies, gas and mail for the fishermen of the harbor. In the winter, a fisherman who went broke depended on credit extended by the store to keep alive until spring. To the fifty or more men of Meyers Chuck, the general store was a fish brokerage house, bank, post office, lending establishment and community hall, all rolled into one.

While most boats have oil stoves, many still have old-fashioned wood burners, and the owners must make frequent trips ashore in search of fuel. In Meyers Chuck, the fishermen who lived in boats piled their stove-wood on the float alongside the point where they habitually docked at night. Since this wood was gathered at the expense of back-breaking labor, a canvas was usually pulled over the pile to make ownership a definite thing. Nevertheless, someone was always missing wood, and hurling accusations in all directions.

Once Ed and I watched a fisherman creep out of his boat and approach a nearby woodpile. He gazed furtively about to see if anyone was watching, then lifting the canvas, deftly grabbed a slab of wood, and dashed back to his boat. A few minutes later we heard him chopping, and it wasn't long before clouds of smoke were billowing from his stovepipe.

When the owner of the firewood came in to dock he took inventory of his woodpile, and promptly missed one piece.

"Gathering firewood is the God-awfullest job in this country," he roared. "A man that'll steal it ought to be strung up like a cattle rustler."

His vengeful eyes roamed up and down the dock until they came to rest on the little boat that was manufacturing great clouds of smoke, but had no visible source of fuel. The irate man made no accusations; he merely glowered at the craft. But the guilty conscience inside the boat needed no accuser. The thief, who was watching the proceedings from his pilot-house, suddenly threw open a window, stuck out his head and shouted: "I've got an oil stove!"

WE frequently heard residents of the harbor speak longingly of the day when they would "have 'er made." Everyone was looking forward to the time when he would have enough money to see him through the winter, and could quit fishing. In spite of high prices in Alaska, a settler in the backwoods can "winter" for as little as four hundred dollars. Game wanders all around him, and firewood is free for the chopping. Most of these hardy settlers set their sights in the spring on a sum of money they deem adequate to see them through the coming winter. When this money is made, they quit work immediately and start laying in their firewood. Once they have accumulated their "winter stake," they're known as "stakies," and it is an old proverb in Alaska that "you can't get any work out of a stakie."

The miseries of the cold season force most of them to spend the period in idleness. But a few set out trap lines, and almost everyone hunts meat periodically. One

Meyers Chuck old-timer gave us his formula for painless wintering in Alaska. "I get drunk in October and sober up in May," he said.

Early in the morning of our fifth day in Meyers Chuck, we joined the long line of fishing boats filing out of the harbor to the fishing beds. When we were clear of the entrance, we dropped our poles, lowered the lines into the water, and settled back to an expectant vigil. The *Maggie Murphy* was fishing in Alaska!

Now, most of the fishermen of Meyers Chuck were classed as hand trollers, since they fished with a single cotton line which they pulled in and let out by hand. But Ed and I were full-fledged power trollers. When Henry Erwick put unlimited credit at our disposal, we had charged expensive gurdies, or power-driven reels, that would permit us to fish with four lines in water instead of one, and to put as many as ten baits on each line. These brass contraptions, which pull in or let out each line at the flick of a lever, added more than one hundred dollars to our bill, but we bought them because someone told us that a fishing boat must have gurdies to make "big money."

THE foundation of power trolling gear is the four long poles that extend out from the sides of the boat. Two of these young trees sprout out from each side of the bow, and two more extend out on each side amidships, the latter two usually being twice as long as those on the bow. The poles jut out at right angles to the keel, and they rest on chocks on deck that point them slightly upward so their tips clear the water by a safe margin.

Four stainless steel wire lines are suspended from the poles, and a lead "cannonball" weighing from twenty-five to eighty pounds is tied to the end of each line. This heavy weight causes the steel lines to extend almost perpendicularly into the water, and the operator can tie on as many hooks and lures as he wishes along their lengths.

Since trolling is an art that can be mastered only through experience, Ed and I had more than our share of trouble that morning. First of all we got in a kelp bed, and fouled up all our hooks; then we turned too sharply and snarled the four lines. By the time the situation was remedied, it was midday, and we hadn't caught a fish. By late afternoon many of the boats had gone into the harbor to sell, and we still hadn't recorded a nibble.

Early in the evening one pole suddenly jiggled wildly, and pandemonium reigned on the *Maggie Murphy*. Both of us dived for the gurdy to start the reel turning. We yanked off the baits coming over the side, watching breathlessly for our fish. Suddenly the salmon broke water, and we began swinging with our gaff hooks. First I swung a mighty blow to stun him, but I missed and drenched Ed with water. Then Ed swung, missed, and drenched me. In the midst of the thrashing, Ed slipped and fell half in the bay, but he recovered and resumed swinging. At the height of the confusion, the little fish threw the hook out of his mouth and swam dazedly away. We glumly lowered the line back in the water, and resumed our vigil.

Later that evening, three fish bit in quick succession, and by keeping calm and collected, we managed to land each one. They were all very small, and we conceded that they might not weigh ten pounds apiece when cleaned. But after all, at the prevailing price of ten cents per pound, we had about three dollars to show for our day's work.

Not until we returned to the float and saw the salmon the hand trollers had sold did we realize how small our fish actually were. We then regretted having kept them, for here we were with some of the most expensive fishing

gear in the harbor, and three of the smallest salmon we had seen in Alaska. The lady storekeeper eyed them, shook her head, and put a six-pound weight on the scales. One by one, she threw the fish on the scales, but not one of the three could lift the bar.

"Sorry, but I can't buy these fish," she said firmly. "They're what we call 'fiddlers.' Not one of them weigh six pounds, and it's against the law to buy fish smaller than that. You'll just have to eat them."

Humiliated to the core, Ed and I took refuge in the *Maggie Murphy's* cabin. We knew only too well that many jokes were being passed in the harbor that night about the two greenhorns in the odd-looking boat, their high-falutin' gear, and their ridiculous catch.

As we were lying silently on our bunks, the boat suddenly lurched, and kindly Lonesome appeared.

"I'm afraid you boys aren't going to make it here," he said. "Meyers Chuck is really a hand troller's fishing grounds. The biggest fish in Alaska are here, but they stay in around the reefs and kelp. If you boys fish out in deep water, you'll only catch small fish; and if you come in where the big ones are, you'll hang up on bottom and lose all your gear. I'd advise you to go up to Wrangell and fish at the mouth of the Stikine River. There's a sand bottom there, and you'll have just as much chance as the old-timers."

Ed and I needed no second invitation. Penniless as we were, we still had gas. When the boats began to file out of the harbor the following morning we were right with them, but this time our poles were lashed to the mast, and the *Maggie Murphy* was bound for Wrangell, Alaska, some eighty miles to the north.

CHAPTER VI

NO IRISH NEED APPLY



WHEN the *Maggie Murphy* eased past a rock breakwater into Wrangell's sheltered harbor, one look at the huge fishing fleet there put us in a mood darker than the weather. In the gloom of a heavy down-pour of rain, we could make out scores of salmon trolling boats, fully rigged and ready to fish, rubbing idly against the docks. This indicated that spring fishing was so poor in the surrounding bays and passages that even the winter-impoorished local fleet had given it up.

It seemed to us that the Wrangell vicinity should provide the finest fishing in all Alaska. But the Stikine salmon, that were showing up at other places in the Territory, had vanished at Wrangell. At least, they were managing to enter the river of their nativity without disturbing the lures of hundreds of fishing boats working in the area.

At dawn next morning we dropped our lines outside the Wrangell breakwater, bent on a do-or-die assault on the salmon. Almost immediately the left rear pole exploded into violent contortions, and after a wild struggle, Ed flopped a giant king salmon on deck. The *Maggie Murphy* had broken into the black side of the ledger! This big, brawny, handsome salmon was the most beautiful sight we had seen in Alaska. We jubilantly calculated that a fish-buyer would have to pay us at least three dollars for him.

Not so much as another nibble favored us the remainder of the morning, but our need for money was so great there was no giving up. While prowling disgruntledly around Etolin Straits seeking better fishing, we stumbled across a fleet of about one hundred boats trolling slowly off a bold promontory of land known locally as the Elephant's Nose. The presence of such a large fleet

seemed to imply that fishing was profitable here, so the *Maggie Murphy* joined the crowd.

For the next five days we made futile attempts to catch salmon while battling wind, wet weather, poor fishing conditions and the worst gang of cutthroats that ever dipped their lines in Alaska waters. Every skipper in this fleet was just as hungry as we. They were all desperately in need of money to buy more gas and food, and finance trips to find more profitable fishing.

Up to twenty hours each day the restless boats teemed around the steep bluff of the Nose, milling over every sign of fish, swishing their poles around just inches from each other, and battling furiously over every hapless king salmon that was unfortunate enough to wander into the area. Fishing hours extended from three o'clock in the morning to ten o'clock at night, and the fleet anchored right on the fishing grounds for its brief interlude of rest.

Once we observed a salmon hit the line of a grizzled, old-time fisherman. He slyly dropped an empty condensed-cream can overboard, folded his arms, and moved slowly through the fleet, completely ignoring the fact that his pole was quivering. When he was far from the can, he pulled in the fish with great thrashing, attracting all the boats in the area. While they milled in the wrong place, the old-timer opened up his engine, sped back to the drifting can that marked the actual location of the school, and caught another salmon before anyone got wise and closed in on him.

IT was impossible to make a catch in secret at the Nose, because of the antics of a tremendous number of seagulls, which hovered over the fleet watching its every move with their beady little eyes. Whenever a salmon broke water, the gulls would cluster over the man pulling in the fish, and scream indignantly until he cleaned it and threw them the entrails. Since the birds betrayed every fisherman who managed to find a school of salmon, they were extremely unpopular. Boat owners cursed the gulls, threw sticks at them, and even shot at them. But Ed and I developed a fondness for the little creatures. We were impressed by their uncanny ability to spot a newly caught fish, and we couldn't see how anyone could blame them for seeking a bite to eat.

There was some moldy bread on the *Maggie Murphy*, and feeding this to the gulls proved to be one of the most pleasant forms of entertainment we had encountered since leaving Tacoma. The minute that bread hit the water, and the screeching gulls gathered over it, every troller in the vicinity came rushing toward us to get in on our "good fishing." The first time I discarded the bread, it touched off a mild traffic jam around the *Maggie Murphy*. When I threw in more bread a few minutes later, additional boats pressed around us, and we could see others heading for us from every direction. By the time I had thrown five handfuls of bread on the water, every craft within sight was milling around the *Maggie Murphy*, and the frantic fishermen were utterly perplexed because they could catch no salmon in our "school."

During the third day of our fiasco at the Elephant's Nose, we observed a strange boat hustling our way from the direction of Wrangell. It plowed right into the middle of the jam of trolling boats and stopped suddenly. The owner then appeared on deck and dropped his poles and lowered his fishing lines in a very firm and confident manner, as if he had carefully surveyed the situation and decided that this was exactly the right place to make a million dollars.

Shortly after he started fishing, a shot rang out from his boat. Obviously he was a member of the enlightened school of fishermen who believe in shooting instead of clubbing salmon prior to hauling them aboard.

It is only necessary to hit the water with a .22 caliber bullet near the fish's head to stun him momentarily. Of course this was precisely the wrong technique to use at the Nose, for the instant that shot sounded, everyone for miles around knew the newcomer had hooked a salmon, and would close in on him. He took a terrible jostling, but apparently the stranger didn't quite understand what had happened, for a few minutes later another shot rang out. This time the gang attacked him with tremendous vigor, and trolling poles lunged at his boat from every direction. He beat a hasty retreat to midchannel, where he circled erratically for a moment, then stopped and had a cigarette to calm his nerves. When the cigarette was finished, Mr. Smartpants hauled in his gear and fled from the Nose as fast as his two-cylinder engine would propel him.

THAT afternoon the fleet evolved into the strangest maneuver we had seen in our tender fishing experience. It all started when a boat-owner was observed catching a big salmon close to a reef near shore. The shallow waters off the reef did look like a natural habitat for fish, and so everyone tried to battle his way in there, but the traffic jam became so acute it was impossible to move. Finally the boats formed a huge circle, and for more than two hours they revolved around and around, with each skipper getting a chance to pass along the reef about once every twenty minutes. Although every fisherman assumed an air of expectancy as he took his turn at passing by the rocks, we never saw a soul catch anything there.

Then one man became greedy, and began to cut across the center of the circle and force his way into line far ahead of turn. The third time he did this, another boat maneuvered outside of him and began to herd the offender into shallow water as he passed along the reef. The greedy fisherman was driven into the rocks, where two of his poles cracked off, and his lines grew taut, then snapped. In the parlance of the trollers, he had "geared down," which is an expensive accident usually involving the loss of about one hundred dollars' worth of lead sinkers, steel line and brass spoons.

The victim unleashed a savage blast of profanity as disaster struck him, but the incident seemed to meet with general approval.

"He had it coming, the fish-hungry square-head," a man in a nearby boat shouted to us.

At the end of five days of trolling at the Elephant's Nose, we had caught a total of four salable salmon, which brought us about six dollars. This was our total gross income for five sixteen-hour days of labor in a cold wind and driving rain, with the accompanying miseries of living in a leaking cabin and donning clammy wet clothes every morning. When I figured up the gas we had burned and the gear we had lost, the record showed that we had been losing about four dollars every day so far.

"It wouldn't be so bad if we could wake up in the morning, throw four dollars out the porthole, and go back to sleep," Ed opined. "But we have to slave from dawn until dark to lose the money."

Saturday night when we fell in line to sell to the buyer, the fishermen of the Elephant's Nose appeared to be in an ugly mood. In the interchange of shouts between boats, there was much talk of abandoning this place. But the buyer himself was very jovial and encouraging.

"Don't leave," he advised us. "The big run will be in next week."

A man standing by the scales quickly contradicted him.

"Big run, hell!" he said to the buyer. "You know there isn't going to be any big run. Sure, you want us

to fish. You'd see us all starve to put a few lousy bucks in your own pocket. I'm leaving for Sitka in the morning."

After a brief conference, Ed and I decided to leave for Sitka ourselves. We pooled every cent we had and bought twenty-five gallons of gas, which was enough to get us somewhere in the vicinity of Sitka, we figured. Not a dime could be spared for food, although our larder now contained nothing but a few packages of damp and limp macaroni, a box of wet oatmeal, a few cans of condensed cream and a container of mixed lard and rainwater.

With hunger gnawing at our insides, we drove the *Maggie Murphy* at top speed down Etolin Channel the following morning, bound for Sitka, with stopovers slated at Point Baker harbor and Port Alexander. We hoped to find a fair-sized community at Point Baker, and possibly a grocery store extending charge accounts; but on arriving there our disappointment was bitter. The sole occupants of this rock-choked little enclosure in a desolately wild region were a handful of hand trollers living in log cabins perched on the crags around the shoreline. The only contact with civilization enjoyed by the settlers here was a weekly visit from a Petersburg buying boat, which picked up the salmon on hand, dropped off supplies for the fishermen, and replenished the ice in the fish storage box.

With a great deal of trepidation, we took leave of Point Baker, and headed for Port Alexander, *via* Sumner Straits, the Spanish Islands, Cape Decision, and a dangerous twenty-mile ocean crossing of the storm-lashed tide-swept mouth of Chatham Straits.

When we came to the jumping-off point for the twenty-mile ocean crossing, the progress of the *Maggie Murphy* ended abruptly. We brought her to a stop, and gazed out on the mouth of Chatham Straits with horror, for a huge swell was rolling, and each individual wave looked like a mountain range. Just as we had decided to postpone the crossing, we sighted a small trolling vessel drawing up astern.

The little boat didn't even hesitate before plunging out into the ocean, on a course for Port Alexander. Heartened by the prospect of having company on the voyage, we fell in at the troller's stern and started across the straits.

WE had never dreamed the *Maggie Murphy* could weather such a sea. At times she would rear up on the crest of a wave so high we could only see the tips of the lofty trolling poles on the boat ahead. At other times we would drop into the trough of the sea so deep we could see the red paint on the bottom of the other vessel. Once the top of a huge wave broke and crested over the *Maggie Murphy* with a terrific thud, and it frightened us so much we raced the engine and drew alongside our companion boat so that its imperturbable skipper would at least see us if we foundered.

To our immense relief, massive Cape Ommaney finally hove into view, but we could see no evidence of a harbor on its inhospitable shores. The vessel ahead of us bore down directly into what appeared to be a solid wall of wave-washed reefs, and we began to wonder if there was anyone guiding it. Then its pilot began dodging through the piles of rock, and skillfully led us to a tiny opening that widened into a snug inlet, lined on one side with the stores and houses of a promising community that we never could have found alone.

This was Port Alexander. We gazed at the little village on wood stilts with more than usual ardor, for we didn't have enough gas to reach Sitka, and if there were no merchants here who were willing to give us fuel on credit, the place was destined to become our permanent home.

CHAPTER VII

LAND OF BEGINNING AGAIN



FADED sign resting prominently over the harbor bade us welcome. It read: PORT ALEXANDER—THE LARGEST STOCK OF LIQUOR ON BARANOF ISLAND.

Port Alexander's large stock of liquor, its houses of amusement and its sheltered anchorage lying close to the famed salmon fishing grounds off Cape Ommaney were the trump cards that once attracted as many as five hundred boats a night to the isolated place, and made it as rip-roaring a little Alaska community as ever drank its weight in bourbon.

During a brief walk along the inhabited side of the harbor, Ed and I found Port Alexander to be only a hollow shell of its former self. We counted one steam laundry fully equipped but abandoned, two fabulously stocked liquor stores that were still doing business when the owner could be prevailed upon to unlock the front door, two abandoned gambling rooms where slot machines that consumed silver dollars stared blankly from the walls, three restaurants—two closed and one without business, and two saloons, where bartenders were tending empty rows of stools.

There were about twenty boats moored in the harbor, but their owners carried the disinterested air of fishermen who had yet to make the first dime of their season, and they were pumping no wind in the village's sails. The place was dead on its feet.

As we walked along the broad path that was Main Street to the residents, we were confronted by a stooped, elderly little man, who was wearing a goatee, knickers, puttees, a khaki shirt, and a golfing cap. He held out his cane to bar our way, and said: "Boys, it's illegal to walk on the streets of Port Alexander sober."

He was the Marshal, we learned. The Marshal was an old-timer who had descended on Port Alexander some years back armed with a box of lawbooks and a wagon load of decorum. The villagers, who were busy making money, carefully weighed both of his attributes, and appointed him to all the administrative offices in town, which collectively paid a bare living wage. His title of "Marshal" was conferred purely through popular acclaim, for the United States Government never knew of the appointment.

The fishermen of Port Alexander were a hardy, weather-beaten breed of deep-sea mariners, who enjoyed a prominence in the village only in proportion to their reputation for "fishing tough." To win respect in this community, a fisherman had to show supreme disregard for foul weather, and consistently "highline," or outearn, his fellow-skipper.

When the problem of charging supplies for the *Maggie Murphy* arose, we experienced difficulty only in avoiding an overload. Before either of us could mention money, our food lockers were crammed with expensive canned food and fresh vegetables, the gas tanks were bulging with fuel, and we were snowed under with best wishes. Furthermore, we spent two delightful afternoons drinking free beer with the compliments of a dour bartender who had an oversupply of the beverage going stale in his dispenser.

The rapid decline of this once colorful port was obviously too much for the merchants to comprehend. For more than thirty years they had reaped a harvest of gold from the prosperous, free-spending fishermen who frequented the place in the summer. But now, as if by a snap of the Almighty's fingers, the easy money had vanished.

The decline set in toward the end of the thirties, and continued with appalling steadiness. Year after year,

the fishing became poorer at the Cape, until the great trolling fleet was unable to make expenses. The residents blamed the Japanese Current, a change in the weather, and mysterious influences of the moon for the situation. Mostly they blamed the herring seine boats which, the fishermen claimed, had depleted the hordes of tiny food fish that once attracted salmon to the Cape. Rarely did anyone ever mention the most logical reason for the decline—that the runs had been fished out by the hundreds of boats that had harvested salmon here.

Five days in Port Alexander exhausted our patience, so we left one gray dawn, bound for Sitka. When the *Maggie Murphy* had negotiated the torturous exit from the port, we could see no trace of this village behind the rock piles of Cape Ommaney, nor could we detect the channel through which we left the place.

The trip to Sitka was extremely scenic, even to our scenery-weary eyes. First the *Maggie Murphy* skirted up the west shore of broad Chatham Straits, where steep, forbidding walls were cut at regular intervals with narrow entrances to fjord-like harbors that had fifty fathoms of water right up against their precipitous shores. Then we turned into Peril Straits, and twisted through narrow channels where currents swirled the boat eerily, as she passed between high, wooded hills. It was early evening when we picked our way through the patches of kelp-laden rock that litter Sitka's harbor.

Batten the hatches and tie down the crew! Here was our boom town!

The small-craft dock was hemmed in by a tremendous fleet of trolling boats. An endless line of fishing vessels, snorting impatiently, awaited their turn to sell to the cold-storage pier where salmon were piled waist high. Figures were scurrying over the boats, along the waterfront, and up and down the streets of the village. The scene reeked prosperity.

After docking, we asked the occupant of a neighboring boat what was causing all the commotion, and he gazed at us with amazement.

"The 'fiss' are in!" the big Swede bellowed.

From Sitka north seventy miles to Khaz Breakers, the sea teemed with big salmon, and fishermen who had spent the first month of the season scratching for a few dollars daily, were now grossing from fifty to two hundred dollars per day. The whole prosperous mob was converging on Sitka for the week-end, to take on supplies, and to throw around fistfuls of cash.

OUR first impulse was to proceed immediately to the fishing grounds and join the silver harvest. But the moment we tied to the pack of boats off the city, new arrivals hemmed us in so suddenly we found ourselves marooned in the middle of a tightly lashed herd of vessels that was so infinitely larger than the dock accommodating it that the structure seemed in danger of being uprooted.

"Relax—you can't get out of here until tomorrow morning," our next-door neighbor advised.

Since we had no money, and there was much work to be done on the *Maggie Murphy's* fishing gear, we decided against going ashore, but the grapevine brought us back a constant stream of reports on the activities up-town. Every bar stool was occupied, there were innumerable drunks on the streets, there had been a fight in front of the Anchor Bar, and a dance was under way, we learned.

We turned in at midnight, but sleeping proved impossible when the seafaring revelers ashore began to make their laborious return trips. The condition in which the majority of them stumbled home was strictly an education. Some were staggering; some were crawling, and each of them was fuming aloud in efforts to recall where in God's world he had left his boat.

In the midst of it all, a tremendous crash on our deck snapped us to attention. The sequence of sounds told us clearly what had happened out there. An unsteady, homeward-bound mariner had stepped into one of our buckets, then collapsed during wild attempts to shake the pail off his foot. Fearful lest he be seriously injured, we started to get up, but suddenly the door flew open, and his irate, drunken face peered in at us.

"Get out here and clean off your deck," he ordered, in forceful terms.

We could have told him where to go to, but there was something compelling about his voice. He spoke in the tones of a man who had been outraged, and had justice on his side. So Ed and I donned our clothes and began to clear off the deck, while the man towered over us and directed our every move. "Get that gaff-hook out of the way. . . . Close your hatch cover. . . . Move that water cask," he ordered.

"Don't you know how to *live*?" he demanded as he wobbled off. "Keep your deck clean, your lines tight, and stay off the cabins."

He seemed incoherent, but we learned later that the indignant fisherman was completely within his rights in issuing us a severe reprimand. The *Maggie Murphy* was now moored in a floating community that had laws, unwritten but none the less binding. We had violated one of the most important of these regulations.

Any seaside community is apt to discover half the trolling boats in the Territory trying to squeeze into its harbor some night. No town had facilities to accommodate such a swarm of vessels, and the usual procedure is for the early arrivals to moor in the available dock space, and the remainder of the boats to tie on outside of them until the fleet extends far out into the harbor. Once this mass of fishing vessels is lashed together, every skipper in the fleet is required to conform to three well-defined and rigidly enforced regulations.

FIRST, he must clear off his deck aft of the cabin to provide a clear path for fishermen moored outside of him. This rule is very important, since it is designed primarily to aid unsteady individuals returning to their boats late at night. An open hatch, for instance, would provide a pitfall an inebriate could scarcely miss in deep twilight. There is a story told in Sitka of a boat owner who left his hatch open over night, and in the morning found five drunks, blue with cold, snoring in the ice of his hold.

Secondly, every skipper is required to show proper regard for boats moored to his craft. He must watch his lines to see that they do not break loose and set everyone adrift; and if he wants out of the pack, he must re-fasten every boat he unties as he makes his way to the rim of the moorage area. We heard of an irresponsible boat owner in Elfin Cove who wanted out of a moored fleet one night, and accomplished it by casting loose every boat outside him, and letting them go free. The occupants of the other boats awoke, found themselves adrift and spied the offender high-tailing out of the harbor. They chased him down, boarded his boat and gave him a well-deserved thrashing.

The third unwritten law states that a man may cross any deck at any time, but he must never step foot on a cabin roof. Crossing the deck creates enough disturbance when a skipper is trying to sleep, but stamping on the roof right over his head renders sleeping impossible. It is very convenient to cross boats by jumping from cabin to cabin, since there is no fishing gear here to obstruct the way. But anyone who attempts this is only baiting underwear-clad, outraged, profanity-hurling fishermen out their bunks.

As dawn grew in brilliance, engines began to start, and soon the entire harbor reverberated to the throaty

roar of unmuffled engine exhaust. For almost a half hour nobody made a move toward untying the skein of lines that held the pack together, for the predominantly Scandinavian fleet was indulging in its sacred morning cup of coffee. Then suddenly, as if by signal, everyone began casting loose from his neighbor, and the horde of boats moved in one mighty surge toward the harbor entrance. They poured through the passage like racing cars heading down the home stretch, and then they broke off in many different directions as each fisherman headed for his favorite fishing grounds.

With the engine straining at top speed, and our noses pressed flat against the pilot-house window, we followed a course toward Kalinan Bay at the northern end of Chicagof Island.

CHAPTER VIII

JACKPOT, HO!



LESS than twenty-four hours after we left Sitka, financial worries, empty pockets and hollow stomachs became only a memory. The *Maggie Murphy* struck a salmon lode along the bleak, seaward coast of Kruzof Island, and her hooks plucked an incredible harvest from the depths of the heaving Pacific Ocean. For seven wonderful days, our only worry was the problem of finding a safe storage place for the handfuls of money paid us by the buyers.

The size of the salmon run inhabiting the submarine areas of the coast amazed us. No matter how far the *Maggie Murphy* ranged from Kalinan Bay, to the north, south or east, fish bit with monotonous regularity.

Work! We scarcely stopped to eat or sleep. The prospect of becoming "stakies" in a few weeks, and of paying our bills and banking a year's wages in less than a month, drove us money mad. Each day, we fished until midnight, sold to the buyer, snatched a brief nap, then returned to our toil on the ocean. For a full seven days, we did not cook, wash or change clothes. Fish blood and slime colored our clothing and specked our faces. The cabin became littered with discarded equipment and tracked with fish offal. The pitching of the boat inflicted scores of bruises on us, and our senses were dulled from lack of sleep. We just caught fish, sold them, and caught more.

Nor were we the only fishermen in Kalinan Bay who were driving themselves to exhaustion. Hardly a boat in the huge fleet was stopping long enough to allow its engine to cool. Fishermen were selling until midnight, and for only two hours after that did anything even to approach silence settle over the harbor. By three o'clock in the morning, roaring exhaust pipes echoed all over the place, as eager salmon hounds started another day's work. There was no rest for us after the first vessel left the harbor, for we just couldn't bear to lie in our sleeping bags when we knew other people were out making money hand over fist.

Fishing in the restless waters of the Pacific Ocean proved to be both exhausting and nerve-racking, for the surface of the sea was always troubled, no matter how pleasant the weather might be. The *Maggie Murphy* rode the ocean swells in a somewhat hesitant manner, with her aged carcass creaking aloud under the strain. Waves seemed to run in regular cycles, with about every tenth comber being much larger than the average. When one of these large swells rolled in from the horizon, we would wait apprehensively for its arrival, wondering how in the world our little boat could ride up the steep sides of such a water monster. But she always wallowed over these giant graybacks safely, through sheer grit and determination, it seemed.

The constant motion jostled us violently at times, and caused unending snarls in our fishing gear. While the gurdies were new, the remainder of our trolling system was hopelessly haywire. At monotonous intervals, a steel line would jump off the wheel in one of the clothesline pullies that escorted it over the side, and we would be forced to tug on the wire, with its fifty-pound weight, until it was put back around the wheel. Every time we did this, slashes were inflicted on our hands. Then a set screw would come loose, permitting the shaft from the engine to spin while the gurdies stood still, and we would bark our knuckles repairing it. Then the long bicycle chain that transmitted power between the gurdies would snare a linen leader, and wind it in a jam around its axle, bringing fishing to a complete standstill. Through it all, we could not forget to bail our vessel at regular intervals, for her leaking was as constant as the flow of the tides.

This ceaseless struggle to keep the gear in order slashed our hands to hamburger, and they bled day and night. Occasionally our fists would stick clenched while we were sleeping, and it would be necessary to soak our hands in water to loosen the dried blood so they could be opened. In spite of the agony this caused us, we followed the advice of fishermen, and did not wear gloves. "Let 'em bleed and soak 'em in salt water," one man told us. "Pretty soon they'll be as tough as horsehide, and you'll never have trouble again."

THE lucrative fishing, however, more than compensated for all our misery. We caught huge king salmon, ranging from twenty to fifty pounds in weight, at whatever depth we fished, or wherever the *Maggie Murphy* prowled. They came up fighting viciously, but after a good whack on the head stunned them, it was a simple matter to stick the gaff hook into their heads and flop them on deck. The fish had to be carefully cleaned, laid out under a wet gunny sack and kept there until sold to the buyer, for he would pay top prices only for flawless specimens that were not bruised or cut on their sides or dried from the action of the sun and wind. Each night when we returned to the harbor the *Maggie Murphy* carried a full deckload of these big salmon, worth from two to five dollars apiece.

Of course the fishermen in the area were a happy lot, but no one in Kalinan Bay seemed as jubilant as the fish buyers. There were six of them, and they were making money so fast that they couldn't hide their exultation. By the end of each day, their barges and packing boats were swamp-loaded with salmon, and the buyers were making two cents on every pound of fish flesh that fell into their clutches. However, the services, courtesy and helpfulness they extended to the fishermen were a joy to behold.

The buyers brought mail from Sitka, and performed errands in town for everyone. For instance, they took cash in to the post office, converted it to money orders, and mailed them to fishermen's wives or creditors. They transported engine parts to town to have them repaired, and they brought back ice cream, liquor, and other special orders. If a boat owner wanted to go to town for a haircut, or to "kick 'er loose" in a good binge, he was perfectly welcome to ride with the buyer. There was no charge for any of these services. All each buyer wanted was a fleet of loyal fishermen marketing all their salmon through him.

We adopted Buyer Seagull as our salmon agent. Art Hatieken, a Finn, owned this organization, which had a branch in nearly every harbor from Sitka north to Icy Straits. He shuttled between his buying barges in a one-hundred-foot packer, the *Seagull*, picking up fish and dropping off supplies and mail. We chose him because his many branch stations insured us of service wherever

we might travel. Once we had adopted him, we sold every salmon we caught to his barge, for the code of ethics governing this matter dictated that a fisherman may sell to no one else if he is to enjoy the full cooperation and service of a particular buyer.

The one question that plagued every man in Kalinan Bay was: "How long will it last?" Such fishing as we were enjoying seldom lasts more than a few days in Alaskan waters. This vast school of salmon was on its way to a spawning river, and such fish do not tarry in one place for any length of time. Alaska fishermen rarely venture predictions on the conduct of salmon, for they don't pretend to know where the fish come from, or where they are bound.

This run had set in from the North Pacific Ocean fresh from that mysterious place where salmon spend their winters. When young salmon are born in rivers, they make their way downstream and vanish in the sea. They are gone for from two to six years, depending on the species, and then they return to the river of their nativity, reproduce, and die. Where they stay during this period of time spent at sea no one has ever discovered. Since they cannot be caught in numbers along the coast in winter, they must not inhabit the coastal shallows. Some fishermen say the salmon go far out into the Pacific Ocean, and descend into its depths. Others say the fish drift with the Japanese Current.

But neither of these theories appear logical, because if the salmon were inhabiting the far reaches of the Pacific, or drifting with the Japanese Current, certainly the ingenious fishermen of Japan or the Pacific Islands would catch one of them now and then. Salmon are not caught off the coast of Japan, or in the Pacific Islands.

The most logical explanation we heard was that these fish spend the major part of their lives under the Polar ice cap. The Arctic waters are known to be rich in feed, and of course no one could detect the fish there since they would be sealed under ice the year around. Only one thing is certain; if this mysterious place the salmon inhabit during the winter is accessible, it would make any man who found it a millionaire, for he could fish the lucrative runs the year around, instead of the few weeks each summer the mature fish appear to spawn in coastal rivers.

ALASKANS have noted a few of the salmon's habits that seem to be constant. For instance, runs frequently appear summer after summer in the same place at the same time. Another reliable meter is the size of the fish. When a big run is due to arrive, very small king salmon begin to appear. At the height of the run, the largest fish are caught. When the salmon begin to move on, the fish become smaller and smaller, until finally only tiny salmon can be caught as the run vanishes. No one knows why these small fish lead every run, and bring up its rear.

All that mattered to us was the fact that fish had set in, and we were fortunate enough to be right in the middle of the favored area. Others were not so fortunate. Hatieken told us that the good fishing extended north of Sitka about one hundred miles, and about fifty miles south of the town. Elsewhere on the coast, fishermen and buyers alike were starving. The news of the Sitka run was spreading rapidly, however, and new arrivals were constantly puffing into Kalinan Bay after a forced draft trip from some distant point.

The first day we tried our luck in the Kalinan Bay vicinity, we made fifteen dollars. This seemed like a lordly sum to us, but we were disappointed when we found others sold as much as one hundred and fifty dollars' worth of fish that night. The second day we boosted our total income to thirty-two dollars, the third day seventy-four dollars, and on our fourth day of fish-

ing here we crossed one hundred and two dollars, to our extreme joy and amazement. By Saturday, we had more than two hundred dollars in a cigar box, the safekeeping of which was rapidly driving us to distraction. First we kept it in our sleeping bags, but we forgot to take it out one night, and I awoke with my feet thrashing in greenbacks. Finally, we lashed it with rope, and hung it from a nail near the cabin door. We figured if the *Maggie Murphy* ever foundered, we could grab the box as we abandoned ship. After all, the money in it totaled about as much as our boat was worth.

Unfortunately, the fish began getting smaller on Saturday, and everyone knew that our salmon harvest was about over. The run was departing, for where nobody knew. King salmon spawn in only a few Alaska rivers, and it is generally believed that the majority of the big schools that appear off the northern coast are bound for the Columbia River, or Washington or British Columbia streams. In the past, determined boat owners have attempted to trail runs, or find them again after they have left a certain locality, but these attempts proved so unsuccessful no one tries it any more.

By Sunday the salmon had all but vanished, and most of the boats in Kalinan Bay headed toward Sitka where their owners could bask in the pleasures their week's profits could buy.

NEITHER Ed nor I had the slightest desire to return to Sitka, and throw away our hard-earned profits. After all, we owed nearly five hundred dollars in bills, and our cash box held only a fraction of the money needed to make this summer a financial success. We decided on a bold plan.

On the southern tip of Kruzof Island is Cape Edgecombe, a barren, rocky promontory in the ocean that is as feared as it is famous for good fishing. Every year, fishermen drown there, because the exposed bluff is thirty miles from the nearest harbor, and sudden gales can whip up a terrifying sea around the cape in a matter of minutes. To troll there in a boat the size of the *Maggie Murphy* was to flirt with a watery grave, but everyone we consulted agreed that it would be profitable, if we cared to tempt disaster. For reasons known only to fish, salmon haunt the steep shores of Cape Edgecombe, and they can be caught there when they can be caught nowhere else. Disregarding all advice, as usual, we ran down to Cape Edgecombe in a matter of hours, and dropped our lines off its forbidding shores.

However, there was a big fleet of boats here, most of them being large, ocean-going Diesel-powered vessels that carried ice and stayed out of port days at a time. There were a few smaller vessels, but nothing so small, or decrepit as ours. None of these other boats offered any companionship, for they shied away from us as though the *Maggie Murphy* were the fleet's "cold nose." As quick as a fisherman looked us over, he would head in another direction, as if to say: "Go away! I don't want to be around when you drown."

We soon found that a night spent at Cape Edgecombe meant certain death to calm nerves and an unruffled outlook. When it came time to quit fishing, all the boats crowded behind a wave-washed patch of rocks known as St. Lazari Island, and dropped anchors. This island, which offered only sparse protection from the open sea, was renowned as one of the worst death traps in Alaska. Often fishermen attempt to ride out a gale behind these barren rocks, but if the storm is a king-size affair, waves pour right over the island and around its sides, and a position behind the islet rapidly becomes untenable for any seagoing craft. If the mariner has tarried too long here, he is lost, for if he can't weather the storm behind the island, he certainly can't stay afloat when he leaves its protection.



One man would steer until the heat became unbearable; then the other took over.

We sold to a buyer anchored in the shelter of St. Lazari, dropped anchor in the midst of the big fleet, then attempted to sleep while the *Maggie Murphy* pitched on ocean swells. No one seemed able to relax here for every skipper had to appear on deck hourly to be sure he wasn't dragging anchor, and to check on weather signs. About midnight, a sudden breeze ruffled the fleet, and as if by magic, the owner of every boat appeared on deck.

An old Scandinavian in a nearby vessel shouted: "Ay tink it iss going to blo-ow." Then he started his engine, hauled in the anchor and chugged out of the anchorage. His departure threw the others in a tizzy, and engines began roaring all around us. But the noise gradually subsided as the breeze died down.

Ed and I decided that if a gale came up this night, we wouldn't flee anywhere. We would stay behind St. Lazari until the *Maggie Murphy* could no longer survive, then smash the boat on the island's rocks, and cling to them until aid reached us. Having arrived at this decision, we relaxed and fell asleep, but when morning came, we left accursed Cape Edgecombe for good, and trolled northward up the coast.

CHAPTER IX

FISH ARE WHERE YOU FIND THEM



NORTH of Sitka the Alaska coast is flanked by jagged reefs, forested with spruce trees, and practically uninhabited for a distance of nearly two hundred miles. The shoreline slopes steeply from rock-studded beaches to low timbered hills where deer, bear, mountain goat and other animals abound.

There are numberless harbors, inlets, twisting passages and offshore islands, but no concentration of cabins worthy of the name *settlement* can be found. A living creature ashore must be a black bear pawing salmon out of a creek mouth, a deer gazing dumbly from the trees, or a seal sunning himself on warm rocks.

For nearly twenty hours Ed and I alternated shifts at the helm of the *Maggie Murphy* while the little boat clawed northward along the coast, skirting this panorama of scenic rock and forest at close quarters. Innumerable harbors beckoned us to shelter for a rest; and some of them boasted buying barges and a fishing fleet, but we drove steadily north. When we met a group of trolling boats operating off Cape Cross, ten miles south of Icy Straits, we stopped and studied the coastline to determine where these vessels were based. Somewhere in this vicinity there had to be a fishing harbor, but it could not be seen with the naked eye, and our coast pilot book didn't mention it. One of the trollers here pulled up gear and headed toward shore, so we followed it. The vessel led us into a foul, reef-strewn bight just north of the stony head of Cape Cross. Breakers loomed all around the *Maggie Murphy*, and huge boulders could be seen passing under her keel. Finally we entered a narrow passage where massive piles of rock towered on each side of us, and the ocean swell was churning water a mere five feet deep.

SUDDENLY we burst into a small cove, nestled snugly in high hills which seemed to cut it off completely from the world. A score of fishing boats dotted the placid waters of the harbor, and seamen were loafing complacently on their decks, enjoying the peace and serenity of the sheltered gorge. Four buying barges rode quietly at anchor, waiting to purchase fish or cater to the needs of boat-owners. Here were gas, supplies, protection and peace of mind a bare five hundred yards from fishing grounds on the restless, open ocean.

We drew alongside a barge bearing the familiar sign *Buyer Seagull* and inquired where we were. The attendant informed us that this was Bear Harbor, and he wasn't a bit surprised when he found we were ignorant of the place, since only a handful of fishermen knew how to find Bear Harbor, and they carefully guarded their secret to keep the anchorage from becoming overcrowded. We decided to stay here, since it looked like a good place to scrub down our salmon-scented boat and wash our slime-stiffened clothing. Unfortunately, our first caller drew alongside the *Maggie Murphy* in a rowboat, before we had time to start either of these projects. He was a bald, stocky, red-faced old-time fisherman who was the business agent for the Alaska Fisherman's Association, and he was called Oslo Hans.

"You boys will have to join the union if you want to fish out of this harbor," he told us in firm tones. "Everybody here joins the union before they fish. Of course, some boats don't, but they ain't made welcome."

We paid Hans a ten-dollar initiation fee, and posted the bright red-and-white plates he gave us on our pilot-house. These plates bore the letters AFA. When we joined his union without a word of protest, Hans warmed up to us, and volunteered information on Bear Harbor.

"It's the finest place to troll in Alaska," he said. "There's good fishing less than ten minutes from where you're anchored. There's a restaurant and a bakery on these barges in the harbor."

As he left, Hans gave us a few words of warning. "Someone might come around and ask you to join the United Fishermen of the Pacific," he said. "Don't join that union if you want to sell fish here," he added ominously.

The Bear Harbor gang consisted mainly of men who lived in ports along Icy Straits, or in Juneau. Since almost all of them were old-time Alaskans who had been working together for years, there was much visiting and shouting between boats. Ed and I immediately fell in love with this spirit of camaraderie, so we established fishing headquarters here. Considerable prejudice existed in the Harbor against "outside" boats, especially those from

the States. But after we posted the union labels on the *Maggie Murphy*, and proved that we were not the usual type of money-hungry operators who would upset the easy-going ways of the harbor by fishing day and night, the others accepted us.

More than half the boats were well-maintained craft owned by honest, hard-working non-drinking Swedes, Norwegians and Finns. Several skippers had their wives with them, and they generally anchored nights in the remote corner of the harbor. The fishermen of the respectable type worked long hours each day, scrubbed their boats meticulously, and never kept residents of the harbor awake with drunken whoops of joy.

Another well-behaved person was Arctic Nels, who had parlayed hard work, clean living and an amazing stroke of luck into a small fortune. Nels' success story began five years back, when he noticed that a group of native hand trollers were pulling in one salmon after another, so he threw out lines and tried his luck.

For nearly three weeks, Nels and the handful of Indians enjoyed sensational fishing. The thousands of king salmon off Cape Cross were moving into Icy Straits to seek their spawning river, and for reasons known only to themselves, the fish had decided to make Lazy Cove their base of operations for a few weeks. On very rare occasions salmon have been known to "school up" in a small harbor like this, and stumbling on such a situation is the fondest dream of every fisherman in Alaska.

Nels showed us how to fish the Surge Bay reef, a vast area of submarine hills and peaks just north of Cape Cross. The expert fishermen of the harbor spent nearly all their time over this reef, zigzagging their lines through submerged valleys just as accurately as if they were guiding an automobile through city streets. After tedious practice and some loss of gear, we mastered one sub-surface gully in the reef. By lining up a clump of spruce trees and a mountain ashore, we could troll along this gully on the floor of the sea, with our lines down twenty fathoms deep when the chart showed only twelve fathoms of water in this area. There were big salmon in this undersea valley, and we scarcely ever negotiated its length without catching one that usually weighed from thirty to fifty pounds.

Once the Surge Bay reef was mastered, it was a poor day indeed when we couldn't make at least twenty dollars. It was evident that we were destined to make at least a thousand dollars apiece this season, and fishing at Cape Cross was anything but work. In the morning we were on the fishing grounds ten minutes after starting our engine. In the evening we sold our fish, divided the money, and devoted the twilight hours to loafing.

With money coming in as steadily as the tide, we were extremely happy amid the pleasant surroundings of Bear Harbor. In fact, life here seemed entirely too good to be true.

We were sitting on deck one evening, counting our day's wages and basking in the glory of our accomplishments, when Oslo Hans came alongside in a skiff.

"There's going to be a strike," he said grimly.

CHAPTER X

TIME AND TIDE WAIT



HERE on this uninhabited strip of Alaska coastline where the only highways were the meandering paths of four-footed creatures, and the only illumination the measured beams of an occasional lighthouse, the *Maggie Murphy* became a victim of one of the worst features of modern civilization—a union jurisdictional strike.

The dispute had been fomented when four boats bearing the plates of the new United Fishermen of the Pacific Union appeared in Bear Harbor, and sold fish. The sight of this union's labels had so enraged the AFA members of the harbor, that they were plotting trouble within a matter of minutes.

"There's a union meeting on the *Seagull* barge at six o'clock tonight," Oslo Hans told us. "You'd better be there and clear your record."

Curious as to how our record might have gotten blemished, Ed and I appeared at the barge right on schedule. We found more than a score of grim-faced men seated on fish boxes, waiting for local AFA President Adolph Larson on the *Adeline* to make an appearance. Secretary-treasurer Oslo Hans had allotted sufficient union funds to buy a round of cigars for all hands. We noted that none of the cooler heads of the harbor were present.

Larson finally appeared and called the meeting to order by beating on an upended fish box with a hammer.

"You all know why we're here," he said. . . .

As the meeting progressed, one speaker after another took over the rostrum, and in bloodthirsty terms, demanded an immediate strike call. Only one man advised moderation, and he was a native.

"By striking now, we only hurt ourselves," he said. "Cutting off the fish coming from this small harbor isn't going to hurt the cold storages, or the buyers, when other fishermen all over Alaska are still selling salmon. A strike here won't hurt the UFP boats either," he pointed out. "They'll just move to another harbor and let us sit."

Unfortunately, his words of wisdom were greeted with derisive shouts from the crowd.

A STRIKE vote was taken, and the members approved a cease-fishing order by a solid margin.

That night Ed and I were discussing the sad turn of events when the *Maggie Murphy* rolled deeply, indicating that a visitor was coming aboard. He proved to be a young fisherman of our age, who operated one of the hated UFP boats in the harbor.

"You fellows are on the wrong side," he told us. "These old-timers pull this strike stuff every summer. As soon as they make a few dollars, they call a strike so they can rest for a few weeks without letting anybody else get ahead of them. They do it just to foul up the boats from the States. They know an outside boat has to clear more money than they do to meet expenses. They hate all outsiders, and they hate you, even if they don't show it. Join up with us, and we'll pull out of here tonight and move some place where we can fish."

After discussing this proposal, we turned it down. We were members of a union that had called a strike, and since we planned on staying in Alaska until we made something that would pass for a fortune, we didn't want to harm our reputation by engaging in any activity that resembled strike-breaking. But the UFP man's words appeared to have more than a grain of truth in them; for the morning after the strike call became effective, the fishermen of the harbor completely ignored the task of picketing, and set about such pursuits as canning salmon, smoking fish, hunting deer, or beaching their boats for repairs.

Led by Oslo Hans, a dozen or more men erected a log smokehouse, and brought in hundreds of pounds of king salmon to be processed into "squaw candy." The smoked salmon they prepared tasted like nothing that can be bought in the States, since the fish were freshly caught, and prepared according to an old Scandinavian recipe that Hans had mastered. "Smoke them a little bit each day and put your fire out nights," was Hans' formula. Other men set up home-canning outfits and began to pack away salmon in tins. It was no ordinary canned

salmon, for each fisherman had a special recipe that called for the use of spices, garlic and all types of garnishments in preparing the product.

Ed and I soon caught the food-gathering fever, and we accepted Hans' invitation to use the smokehouse. But when we got out in the ocean to catch our fish, we found that it was almost impossible to troll, because a dozen halibut boats were operating in the area. The halibut fishermen had heard of our strike, and taken advantage of it by moving into the rich Cape Cross fishing area. The coast was dotted by flags, attached to floating drums, that marked halibut set-lines.

"If the strike wasn't on, there'd be a war," Les Russell on the *Sophie* told us. "The trollers would slash the gear hooked to those flags, and turn it loose. The halibut men know better than to move in on us trollers."

In spite of the halibut lines that were interlaced throughout the fishing area, we managed to pull about five hundred pounds of salmon aboard the *Maggie Murphy*, which we smoked according to Hans' recipe. Some of it we traded for salt venison and canned salmon, and our larder bulged with the provender of this rich country.

ONE morning the *Seagull* burst in through the entrance. The vessel was a welcome sight, because it carried the first mail and supplies to arrive since the strike started. But if the men of Bear Harbor expected a fond greeting from the skipper, Art Hatieken, they had another think coming.

Hatieken, knowing nothing of the strike, had traveled three hundred miles with our supplies and mail, expecting to find his barge loaded with fish. But he found the fleet paralyzed by more than a week of debauchery, and nary a salmon on hand that could provide him with a little profit for a six-hundred-mile trip. He exploded into furious rage, climbed atop the pilothouse of the *Seagull*, and addressed the entire harbor in loud, indignant tones.

"Get out and fish!" he roared. "The season's almost over. The snowballs will be flying, and you'll be saying you ain't got it made!"

His indignant eyes roamed over the idle boats anchored all around him.

"You can lay around and drink all winter," he shouted. "Why can't you keep pitching for three lousy months in the summer? There's no strike anywhere but here," he added indignantly.

Hatieken's bitter rebuke seemed to snap the inactivity that had gripped Bear Harbor. As if by magic, fishermen appeared on deck, and began polishing spoons and untangling gear. The word was passed around that all skippers could resume operations at eight o'clock the following morning. But no union meeting was called, and no official proclamation marked the end of our harbor-wide dispute with the UFP boats. The ringleaders seemed content to let the strike evaporate.

As we settled down to the routine of a fisherman's life, we gave considerable thought to the problem of winning ourselves a reputation. To become a fisherman of prominence in Alaska, a man has to win a reputation for being "tough." He must "fish tough," which means that he has to show supreme disregard for storms, foul weather and rough seas. He has to pursue his work day after day, and bring in a good catch every night, regardless of weather conditions.

The majority of fishermen in Alaska are Scandinavians who are born to the sea and who are as much at home afloat as they were in their mothers' arms. Many of them fished in the stormy waters of the old country when they were hardly more than children. A good Norwegian, Swede or Finn fisherman will sail a small boat into the roughest sea without fear, and can show any

other national a few things about earning a living on the bosom of the old gray widow-maker.

Ed and I soon learned that the members of the Bear Harbor fleet had nicknamed us "the Irishers." We knew that they were curious as to how tough we were, for Irish fishermen were something of a novelty in the Territory. Privately, we felt that they sneered at "this pair of Irishers" who thought they could vie with Scandinavians. So we set out to be tough. And we finally did score a major triumph in our campaign to win prominence, but it came out of ignorance, rather than bravery.

We awoke one morning to find a fresh breeze blowing through the harbor, but it did not appear strong enough to develop into a full-fledged storm. As usual, we started the engine and got under way before dressing, pulling on our clothes as we guided the boat out to sea. When we arrived at the harbor's narrow entrance, we were amazed to discover that huge waves were breaking over the shallow bar, the same as they would on a beach. Apparently the swells were so large that they were uncovering bottom in the entrance, which was only about ten feet deep at low tide.

This situation is extremely hazardous to small boats, but we didn't know it, so we waited until there appeared to be a lull in the storm, then gave the *Maggie Murphy* full throttle, and plunged into the breakers. The trip from the harbor entrance to deep water was the most terrifying experience we had known in Alaska. The waves rolling into the shallow water were at least twenty feet high, and their tops were sharp as a knife. The *Maggie Murphy* plunged up and down their perpendicular sides so abruptly that we expected the little boat's back to break any minute.

On reaching the ocean, we found that a strong wind was howling up the coast, and a heavy sea was running. There was no hope of getting our fishing lines in the water, since our boat was pitching so violently the poles would have plunged into the waves and snapped, if we had lowered them. Furthermore, we found to our astonishment that there wasn't a single other fishing craft in sight.

We turned around, and started to flee back into shelter, but then a horrible realization came to us: we couldn't get back in! The *Maggie Murphy* had barely made it out, bucking against tremendous waves. It is much harder to avoid being capsized by huge combers when traveling with them, since they carry the vessel on their crests at terrific speed, and the boat usually gets out of control, turns sideways to the swell, and is rolled over. It would be suicide to attempt to get back in Bear Harbor until high tide, when the water over the bar would be much deeper, and the huge waves wouldn't turn into foaming breakers. But high tide was four hours away.

We gave up any thought of fishing, and began traveling in circles on the ocean, completely terror-stricken by the gale, which seemed to be getting stronger. If the waves continued to get bigger, the bar would soon be a death trap at high or low tide, and by that time the *Maggie Murphy* would probably not be able to weather the blow in deep water.

WHEN four hours had passed, we made a desperate attempt to reach safety, and we managed to do it, after being scared out of our wits while crossing the wave-lashed bar. When a great sea swelled us right through the entrance into placid waters of the harbor, we experienced a tremendous feeling of relief. Aside from wasting gas, and reducing ourselves to nervous wrecks, we had accomplished nothing this day; but when we stopped at the *Seagull* barge for groceries, we found a large admiring crowd of fishermen waiting to question us. We were amazed to discover that these fishermen thought we had taken a well-calculated risk, in going out

in the storm, because we were fearless and eager to fish. They didn't know how dumb we were.

"Yumping yimminy, but you took a chance," said Lars Nordgren on the *Arne*. "Did you catch any fiss?"

"Oh, we gave it a try," Ed said. "Couldn't get nothing because it was so rough," he added nonchalantly.

We then decided that a good way to add laurels to our reputation was to fish longer hours. So we began getting up at four o'clock in the morning, and fishing until ten o'clock at night. But by keeping at it, regardless of our fishing luck, we found that we could nearly double our income. It wasn't long until we were selling more fish each night than any other person in the harbor.

One summer afternoon, we inadvertently scored another triumph, in our drive to gain prestige. We were fishing far offshore, with our lines down very deep, when we carelessly allowed the *Maggie Murphy* to come too close to the Serge Bay reef, where the ocean was shallow. Our hooks were perilously near the bottom, when suddenly one pole went into wild gyrations, that apparently were caused by our lead coming in contact with the reef. We immediately stopped the boat, and began reeling the line in with the gurdy. Then we noticed that the *Maggie Murphy* was traveling backward, propelled by tremendous jerks on the line. We had hooked some kind of a monstrous fish!

IT took about twenty minutes to bring him up, but finally our marine monster broke the surface. He was a huge halibut, who had bitten our hook when it got down close to his natural habitat on the bottom. We weren't aware that a big halibut is one of the most difficult fish to subdue and kill, so we eased him to the side of the boat, sank a gaff hook into his head, and pulled him aboard with both of us heaving on the gaff handle. The minute the submarine giant got aboard the *Maggie Murphy*, he commenced to whack the deck with all the power in his flat body, which appeared to measure at least five feet long, and three feet wide. He sent fishing gear flying in every direction.

He beat the ship with such tremendous thumps, that we feared the cheap decking might give up the ghost any minute. Suddenly he bounded right into the pilot-house door, slid over the top of the engine, where four spark plugs shocked him and made him wilder, then flopped down to the floor of the cabin, where he recommenced his pounding. His tail was in our food bin, throwing groceries in every direction, and he splashed blood and gurry all over the bunk, and walls of the compartment. Ed raced below, sank a gaff hook into his head, and pulled him over the engine, back out on deck, where he broke loose and resumed jumping up and down with renewed vigor. At last, Ed was seized by a brilliant inspiration: He opened the hatch, and pushed the big fish into the hold, where he would be trapped. But the huge halibut continued to jump, and he whacked the sides of the *Maggie Murphy* with such force we were afraid the boat would split open. Finally we headed for the harbor, to get him on a buyer's barge. The fish was still recoiling convulsively when we heaved him onto the scales.

Since the halibut weighed one hundred and thirty-five pounds, he brought us nearly fifteen dollars in cash, and the monster caused a minor sensation in the harbor.

Our attempts to be daring, however, almost caused our downfall one morning. We decided to impress the fleet by skirting in close to reefs along the shoreline, where there were some big fish to be caught, at risk of boat and life. We were not more than fifty yards from a line of rocks where the huge ocean waves were crashing, and sending plumes of spray high in the air, when our engine stopped dead. I tried to make emergency repairs, but I found that the battery was completely

dead, probably due to a short circuit within its plates. There was no hope of starting the engine, so we were marooned about fifty yards from death and destruction, with the wind rapidly blowing us toward the reefs.

Both of us ran on deck, and shouted and waved for help until an old fishing boat about a half-mile away headed in our direction. The skipper brought the boat alongside, and we shouted a request for a tow into the harbor. He was an aged, silent Swede who had never before spoken to us, and we doubted if he would extend us aid. But the old fisherman surprised us by doing one of the most brave and generous acts we had ever seen. He turned his own boat loose perilously near the reefs, launched a skiff, rowed over to us, and threw a six-volt, dry-cell battery onto our deck. Then he raced back through the big waves to his own vessel, which he caught barely in time to keep it from being washed aground. Thanks to his bravery, we got the engine started, pulled in our lines, and reached safety, without suffering a bit of damage.

We tried to pay him for his great risk, but he would take nothing but his battery. We learned that it is the code of the sea to give such aid, when another mariner is in trouble. All we were expected to do to repay him was to say: "Thanks. I'll do the same for you some day."

We felt rather foolish, after causing another person to take such a desperate chance because of our foolhardiness, so we were more than overjoyed about a week later, when we found a large trolling boat, the *Edna of Wrangell*, drifting helplessly about four miles offshore. The owner and his young son were sitting on the cabin roof, powerless to do anything about their predicament, since the engine was hopelessly disabled.

"You want a tow?" we shouted.

"Whatever you say," he answered. "I've got no way to get home."

His words were in accordance with the code of the sea. He couldn't demand that we waste a half-day pulling him to safety. It was up to us to volunteer. We knew he would give his eyeteeth to reach shelter, so we didn't waste a minute in putting a line aboard, and starting the long pull back to Bear Harbor. The *Edna* was at least forty feet long, so it was like a fly pulling the *Queen Mary*, as the little *Maggie Murphy* towed the big vessel to shelter. Both the owner and his son paced the deck nervously as we pulled them through the harbor entrance, where big waves twisted and rolled both boats, but we brought them safely through, and towed them the entire length of the harbor before stopping.

We cast the *Edna* loose nonchalantly, as if rescues such as this were commonplace with us, but inwardly we swelled with pride, when the owner of the crippled ship said: "Thanks, boys. I'll certainly do the same for you some day."

ALASKA's fishermen are always willing to help out a man in distress, not only to save his life, but to save his boat, which is everything to him.

We were fishing far out in the ocean one day, when we saw a curious-looking white wall, toward the horizon. It looked like a cloud hanging close to the water, but after studying it awhile, we decided it was a distant bank of fog, and we paid no further attention to it. But the next thing we knew, a sudden pall of white engulfed our boat, and as we took a last glimpse at the rapidly disappearing shoreline, we saw the entire fishing fleet pouring into the entrance of Bear Harbor. They were fleeing from this white menace, but we had foolishly permitted ourselves to become lost in the fogbank, which the wind had brought in from the ocean.

The fog was so thick we couldn't see the bow of the *Maggie Murphy* from the stern, and we didn't dare try

to grope our way into the harbor, for we were almost certain to end up on a reef. We were marooned on the sea, bewildered and terrified, and there was no hope of reaching safety until the curtain of white lifted.

When darkness came our terror and confusion increased, and by dawn we were reduced to fear-crazed human wrecks. We had been steering every direction of the compass, so we had not the slightest idea of where we were. However, the Lord and His angels no doubt knew exactly where the *Maggie Murphy* was all night, for a steady stream of fervent prayers had been soaring heavenward, from her owners.

The fog lifted about ten o'clock next morning, and we found ourselves at a point about five miles north of Bear Harbor, and about four miles offshore. We got back into the harbor on our last gallon of gas, and it was a terrible effort to hide our extreme fatigue and nervousness when we faced the other fishermen.

"You was taking chances," North Sea Ole told us. "Sometimes dot fog don't lift for weeks."

"Aw, a little fog never hurt anyone," I said, as I hid my hands in my pockets so he couldn't see them tremble.

That did it. In fact, Black Smitty made our chests swell with pride when he told us that every fisherman in Bear Harbor figured that "The Irishers on the *Maggie Murphy* are pretty damn tough."

CHAPTER XI

THERE'S ONE ON EVERY FRONTIER



URING the short fogbound days of the northern Indian Summer, hordes of coho salmon appear as if by magic in the bays and channels of Southeastern Alaska.

Beginning in early August, "the cohos" make their appearance along the ocean coast. They tarry here for a week or more; then they vanish, and suddenly the sheltered inside passages from Icy Straits to Dixon Entrance teem with these small, scrappy fish.

When coho salmon start to run, fishermen by the hundreds stampede to "inside" fishing grounds, for the annual harvest of these easily caught salmon is an activity dear to their hearts.

Reports that "the cohos are running" spread through Bear Harbor about three weeks after the ending of the disastrous jurisdictional strike. We joined the stampede, leaving on a Saturday night, close to the stern of the old *Clara Marie*. We were bound for "the Dunkhole," a sheltered cove on Cross Sound; but since the entrance to this inlet was very narrow and hard to find, we elected to let the Sagerstad brothers lead us there.

We found the Dunkhole a fisherman's paradise. The haven was entered through a long, narrow channel that was wide enough to accommodate small boats, but too narrow to admit any wind or heavy sea. At the end of this rocky channel was a spacious circular harbor nestled in steep green hills which served as a perfect buffer against winds from every quadrant.

However, we quickly found that a terrific controversy was raging over the proper name of the place. For years this protected cove had been known to every fisherman on Icy Straits as the Dunkhole. But in recent years an *entrepreneur* had come to the harbor, and he had changed its name. This enterprising Scandinavian had built a general store, post office, and a substantial dock. A restaurant, one other general store, and a bar and liquor store had quickly blossomed in the village.

When the Scandinavian and his wife applied for a post office, they listed the name of this community as "Elfin Cove." But stubborn fishermen who had been



While we clung to the cabin walls in terror, the Maggie Murphy negotiated the passage on her own, first traveling sidewise, and finally, straight backward.

using the harbor since the turn of the century would have none of the Elfin Cove business. To them, the place was and would always be, the Dunkhole.

Whether the name be Elfin Cove or the Dunkhole, one thing became immediately clear: we had come here on premature reports. There were no cohos to be caught in the waters of Cross Sound, and there were no king salmon, either. But neither we nor any of the other newly arrived skippers could stomach the thought of returning to Bear Harbor, so a number of us took a job salvaging canned salmon from a burned-down cannery on Cross Sound just a few miles from Elfin Cove.

Thousands of cans of salmon, piled ten feet deep, were waiting to be salvaged. Many of the cans were burned through, and a disagreeable odor pervaded the beach area. Furthermore, portions of the cannery building were still standing overhead, creating a definite working hazard.

Late that afternoon we observed a small troller speeding toward us from the direction of Elfin Cove. The troller drew up at the dock, and its owner's head popped out the pilothouse window.

"The cohos are in," he shouted to us. "Everybody is loading up in Indian Pass and Icy Straits."

We manned our boats like firemen reacting to the station bell, and in a few moments exhaust-pipes were roaring. The fleet pulled out, and headed pell-mell toward the Sound.

Ed and I drove the *Maggie Murphy* at full throttle through narrow Indian Pass into Icy Straits, and then traveled twenty miles up the straits to Point Adolphus before letting the gasping engine come to rest. We were utterly determined to cash in on the coho run, if we had to fish twenty-four hours a day to do it, for worry over our financial condition was putting furrows in our brows.

There was several hundred dollars in the cigar box, but this would not pay our bills, let alone provide sufficient funds to build a cabin and stock it for the winter. What saddened us was the fact that we had found the ideal location for our winter cabin, if only we had the funds to build it. Along the tide-swept, crystal blue waters of Icy Straits, where green-clad mountains rim the shore, and icebergs clutter every passageway, Ed and I found a scenic, bountiful land that surpassed our wildest dreams about Alaska.

THE waters of the Straits teemed with every species of fish known in Northern seas. Deer by the hundreds roamed the shoreline. There were mountain sheep and goats in the hills, and marten, mink and other fur-bearing animals in the spruce forests above the beach. There were dozens of sheltered coves and harbors where the *Maggie Murphy* could be moored for the winter, and our cabin erected on the shore. This was the Alaska that old Charley had described in the glow of his oil stove.

Unfortunately, the difficulties connected with "inside" fishing soon dulled our expectations of getting rich in a few weeks, even in this fisherman's paradise. We faced a hundred new problems here, not the least of which were a continual morning fog, icebergs that swirled about in the clutch of tidal currents, crowded fishing grounds, and the fact that there were so many species of worthless fish swimming in the straits they prevented us from catching coho salmon.

The icebergs were potentially the most treacherous of all these factors; but finally we learned an old fisherman's trick of avoiding these big cakes of ice.

It seems that seagulls do not like to fly in the fog, and their favorite perching place in murky weather is on an iceberg. Hundreds of gulls would be riding each berg, screaming at the tops of their voices, presumably because the cold ice chilled their feet. At any rate, if a boatman listened carefully, he could hear the shrill screams of the gulls in time to avoid a collision with the drifting ice.

The conglomeration of fish living in these crystal clear waters posed a problem we never did overcome. Cohos were abundant in the Straits, but so were four other breeds of salmon. There was a ready market for cohos, or kings if one could be caught; but pink, chum, or sockeye salmon, and all varieties of cod, were worthless to us.

There is a vast difference between the various breeds of salmon. The pink salmon, for instance, is a little fellow who rarely surpasses ten pounds in weight. His pale pink flesh is very edible, but "pinks" are not considered a high-grade salmon for the fresh-fish market, or for smoking or salting. Canneries buy them, but the price paid is so small it is profitable only to catch them in large purse-seine nets. The chum, or dog salmon is a little larger than the pink, but he's considered a low-grade fish too. Unless a fisherman has four or five hundred chums, he hasn't got a payload. Sockeyes bite on hooks so rarely that no trolling boat owner expects to

make money on them. King salmon were very profitable, but there were few in Icy Straits at this time of year. There was no market at all for codfish, unless they were hauled to a cold storage in one of the large towns, and that was not feasible for us. Coho salmon were our one and only source of income, and although they were plentiful in Icy Straits, there were so many worthless fish biting that we couldn't catch any substantial number of cohos.

After battling fog, icebergs, scrap fish and heavy traffic for a week, our discouragement knew no bounds. Then, while we were lying at anchor one evening, the Kennedy brothers from Bear Harbor brought their boats alongside the *Maggie Murphy*, and bade us join them on an expedition down the straits to Gull Cove.

"If we can get out of this mob, and fish on our own, we might find cohos," Avery said. "The *Beulah* is coming with us, and Charley's the best fisherman on Icy Straits. If he can't show us how to make money, nobody can!"

The proposition sounded good, so the following morning we fell in behind the Kennedy boats and the *Beulah*, which was an ancient, boxy-looking vessel festooned with a square window-pocked cabin that resembled an unkept greenhouse. On arriving at Gull Cove, Charley dropped his anchor, and the Kennedy brothers moored to one side of the *Beulah*, while the *Maggie Murphy* snuggled up to the old vessel's other side.

That night, in the dank, odorous galley of the *Beulah*, Ed and I became acquainted with Charley, a short, stocky halfbreed, with a prominent nose and dark complexion. After a few minutes of conversation, a very amazing fact came to light. The purpose of this trip was not to seek cohos at all. Charley, it developed, was a notorious creek poacher and trap pirate, and he and the Kennedy brothers had singled us out as likely accomplices in some nefarious activities that were to begin immediately.

CHARLEY advanced a plan of attack that was supposed to put us all on Easy Street before the snow arrived. He had an illegal gill net hidden in his hold, and he knew where there was a nearby creek choked with spawning cohos. We would take the net into the creek mouth, poach cohos, and load up the *Beulah*. While he was running the fish to a buyer, we could gather up another load and have it waiting for him when he returned.

"You catch 'em, I'll sell 'em; and we'll split the cash five ways," he said.

Using a gill net in a creek was an activity highly frowned upon by law-enforcement agencies. But Charley's lawlessness did not end even here.

"We'll knock over that fish trap out there," he said, jerking a thumb toward a huge contraption of nets and piling at the entrance to the cove. "The watchman's crooked. You'll see tonight."

By midnight, we realized that Charley had sized up the local trap watchman very accurately, for the man was obviously dishonest. Under cover of darkness, several seine boats slipped up to the big structure to dip salmon from it.

A fish trap consists of a large enclosure formed by stringing netting around wood piles driven into shallow water along the beach. This enclosure is open at one end, but the opening is a very narrow corridor partially blocked by net baffles. At the mouth of this corridor is a huge, funnel-shaped net enclosure, that serves to direct salmon right into the tiny trap entrance.

Fish swimming along the shoreline enter this funnel, make their way to the entrance, and swim into the enclosure, where they are considered to be trapped. Of course, the fish could turn around and go back out the same way they came in, but there is no funnel on the

inside to guide them, and salmon aren't very intelligent. Few of them ever do anything but mill around inside the trap, pushing wildly against the netting everywhere but at the tiny entrance.

Each day, the cannery that owns the trap sends out a packer to collect fish, but sometimes pirates get there first. If the watchman is not completely honest, he may accept a bribe to "look the other way," while willing hands dip all the salmon out of the enclosure. This is not considered too risky an enterprise, since the United States Government does not patrol the traps. It is up to the cannery to guard its own fish, and about all the operators can do is to hire a private patrol vessel.

Poaching creeks is an activity considered much more dangerous than robbing traps. The Fish and Wildlife Service has prohibited fishing on creeks, since salmon can be slaughtered by the thousands once they get into the narrow confines of a stream. To enforce this law, the Service uses airplanes and patrol boats, and creek watchmen. The airplanes are dreaded by poachers, since they strike without warning, and the high-speed patrol boats are feared almost as much as the aircraft.

Ed and I gave some thought to Charley's propositions. We didn't want to have our cigar box emptied by a fine, but we didn't want to miss out on the payoff if there were thousands of dollars to be made on the expedition, either. Charley wasn't asking us if we cared to join him; he took it for granted that we would. Next morning he was up bright and early, and he went to work pulling his gill net out of the hold.

"Better bring your gaff hooks. Damn fish will splash scales all over you if you can't club 'em," he muttered. "Gotta take this net ashore and patch it a little."

What shocked us was the careless manner in which he made preparations for wrongdoing. As he rowed ashore with a net that could bring a jail sentence the moment a law-enforcement officer saw it, he was in full view of any boat that might have been passing on Icy Straits, since the harbor was wide open.

By the time he had returned to the *Beulah*, Ed and I had made up our minds to reject his proposition. We had no desire to go to jail, and if there was so much money in poaching, why was Charley so ragged, and his boat so dilapidated?

The Kennedy brothers were still in their bunks, so we didn't have to make explanations to them. We untied the *Maggie Murphy* from the *Beulah*, and gave a healthy push that opened water between the two ships. Then I shouted to Charley:

"We're going back and try Point Adolphus again."

His amazement defied description. He was dumfounded to find that we would turn down an offer to learn the genteel art of illegal fishing, and earn big money while we were at it. We started the engine, and headed out of the cove without ever looking back.

FOR another week we attempted to make a stake on the coho run, but our hearts just didn't seem to be in the task. The same horde of boats was there, the same icebergs, the same fog and scrap fish, and our cigar box filled with cash all too slowly in view of the imminence of winter.

One evening about ten days after we had abandoned Gull Cove, the Kennedy brothers guided their boats around the broad nose of Point Adolphus, and dropped anchor on its east shore. The brothers greeted us in a friendly manner, but they did not mention one word about arch-poacher Charley. Finally I broached the subject by blurting:

"How did you make out? Did you get any cohos out of the creek?"

They hesitated, then broke out in foolish grins and one answered sheepishly:

"Sure. We got hundreds of cohos, but a patrol boat took them all. The fish are gone for good, but Charley will be back in ninety days."

CHAPTER XII

TROUBLE IN PARADISE



INTER'S first icy blast rolled the *Maggie Murphy* to her beam ends on a morning in early September. A chill wind swept suddenly out of the north, and gained in strength until its frigid breath was churning the sea, and it moaned through our rigging with an ominous wail.

The wind had a startling effect on the boats fishing at Point Adolphus. Fishermen hauled in their gear frantically, and every vessel in the fleet started a mad dash in the direction of the nearest shelter, a harbor some twenty miles to the east. This sudden blow was a "Glacier Bay gale," which is an awesome weather phenomenon that curses the Icy Straits region. These unpredictable winds sweep out of the glacier country at intervals throughout the fall and winter, to whip the waters of the straits into a frothing sea that is hazardous for all fishing vessels.

"When a Glacier Bay wind catches you at Point Adolphus, there's only one thing to do," an old fisherman had warned us. "Git goin', and git goin' fast."

The fleet got goin' in no uncertain terms. With engines at full throttle, the fishermen raced for shelter, while their vessels tossed on waves that seemed to grow steeper every minute. By the time all the storm refugees had reached the sheltered bay, the boats were stretched into a line nearly a mile long, with the wallowing *Maggie Murphy*, and other slow craft, bringing up the rear. The line of vessels headed straight to a native village on the north shore of the inlet, where fishermen tied up and swarmed ashore to transfer this peaceful Indian community into a junior boom town.

The village fascinated Ed and me, for it was populated and governed almost entirely by natives, and white men stepped softly here. Ninety per cent of the local residents were members of a tribe of Indians that had camped on this sheltered shore since before historical times in Alaska. At first they had lived in skin tents and log shelters, but white authorities came and moved them into crude frame houses. Then a blessed fire wiped out the ramshackle buildings that had been erected in early days, and the enterprising natives rebuilt a neat, modern community. It consisted of a broad path flanking the bay shore, on which were grouped a number of grocery and drygoods stores, two marine filling stations, an ice-cream parlor, a theater, and dozens of small wooden houses, but nary a saloon nor a liquor store.

Since Alaska law makes natives the equal of whites, nothing prevents an Indian from buying all the liquor he can afford. But in this village bars were extinct, and all the residents were "technical teetotalers," due to the efforts of one crusading missionary. The story of his fight to drive booze from the village was told to us by a native fisherman, who dearly missed the binges of the good old days, but who freely admitted that the godly man had benefited the town.

When the resourceful missionary tackled the task of drying up the village, he chose a motion-picture camera as his chief weapon. Day after day for almost a year, he walked the paths of the town, focusing the camera on every helpless alcoholic he could find. Finally he had several thousand feet of film depicting an endless succession of drunks staggering on the paths, sleeping on the ground and doing all sorts of disgraceful things.

Then the missionary took his film to the territorial capital in Juneau, and triumphantly showed it to law-enforcement officials. Of course the authorities were shocked; they had seen a two-hour movie that had neither dialogue nor plot, but which painted a very dark picture of conditions in the native village. Machinery was set up that permitted the decent majority of the residents to vote the village dry, and bars and liquor stores were closed immediately.

Unfortunately, we found evidence that just a few determined drinkers had found a way to evade the local prohibition. Two buxom native girls reeled past us on the main street, obviously drunk, and smelling strongly of a peculiar odor that reminded us of a Hershey bar. We were told that the girls had been drinking vanilla extract that had a high alcoholic content. Unscrupulous operators in town, who could not legally be arrested, were selling the potent flavoring by the gallon.

It was Saturday night, and this remote village had the same air of gayety that might be found on such an evening in any small country community in the States. A dance was starting up in the village hall, and the theater, which actually was a large frame house with its windows boarded, had its front light shining on posters advertising a cowboy movie. Young native boys, dressed in their fanciest slacks and sport coats, were standing in front of the theater, sucking on cigarettes, and ogling young girls passing by. Down at the docks, native-owned seiners and trollers were arriving steadily, for on Saturday nights Indians abandon cabins and fish camps the length of Icy Straits to visit the village and take in the dance or movie, or to do their buying.

After the theater let out, the dance ended, and the merrymaking subsided, a great peace descended over the village and the mirror-smooth water of the harbor. There was an old fisherman lolling on the deck of a nearby troller, and we decided to solicit his opinion as to how we could make a stake in the remaining few weeks of the fishing season. The man turned out to be one Pete Christianson, a tall, weatherbeaten Scandinavian. He had been drinking beer for several hours, so he was in a very mellow and philosophical mood. He launched into a history of himself and his boat, without any urging on our part.

THE old-timer took a dim view of our chances of making anything that resembled big money before the full force of winter cracked down.

"It's too late," he said, as he downed a big swig of beer, settled back against the cabin, and burped knowingly. "That's the way it always is up here. First there's no fish because it's too early; so you wait awhile, and then it's too late. I've never seen it just right."

Pete told us flatly that our last hope of making a stake was "fall fishing."

"The fall king-salmon run will be starting any time now, and the fish will be big and prices good. You might have a month of fishing yet, and maybe you'll hit it lucky," he said.

Before we could leave the old-timer, he insisted on telling us a long tale about his boat.

Pete swore that the cabin on his boat had been deliberately designed to give the vessel a ghostly appearance, because the natives believed the *Black Bear* was haunted, and he wanted to encourage this belief.

"It's convenient," he said. "I'm never bothered with prowlers, and they always clear plenty of space for me when I come into dock."

The widespread conviction that the boat was haunted, came about, according to Pete, when a young native had been found dead aboard the craft, his head cut cleanly off. The young man, and a newly wedded wife, were crossing Icy Straits in the *Black Bear*, when the vessel

had suddenly sprung a leak. The man told his wife to steer, while he went down into the hold to bail. Although he never returned, the wife was not alarmed, and she steered the boat into the dock at the village.

She went back and looked down in the hold, then emitted a shriek that aroused every resident in the little community. The commissioner removed the body and the severed head, then proceeded to investigate the case. There was no possibility that the man could have cut off his own head, and his wife was the only other person aboard at the time of the tragedy. But her grief seemed so genuine, and so few people could believe that the small, gentle woman would cut off anyone's head, the commissioner just couldn't bring himself to arrest her.

"I bought the boat right after that," Pete said. "I always figured that the woman killed her husband, because there wasn't any other way it could have happened. But last year I nearly lost my leg in that hold, and now I know that the wife was innocent," he said.

"The propeller shaft passes through the hold, right out in the open," he said. "Last summer, while I was traveling, that whirling shaft caught a piece of my pants legs. It wound the pants right in, and it would have pulled off my leg if the material hadn't ripped. Now, that native was dressed up for the dance, and probably he was wearing a scarf or a necktie. He was crawling around in the hold looking for the leak, when either the scarf or necktie touched the whirling shaft, and commenced to wind around it. It pulled his neck right in, and with the engine turning at full speed, something had to give. It was his neck."

After hearing Pete's impressive tale, we retired in the *Maggie Murphy*, vowing that the very next morning, we would tear ourselves away from this pleasant village, and resume fishing operations.

IN southeastern Alaska, "fall fishing" refers to a brief period of time just before the advent of winter, when a handful of fishermen pit themselves against the fury of gales and the hammering of coastal rain, in a desperate last attempt to make a stake.

Ed and I would have liked nothing better than to quit work for the year, but we didn't have a winter stake. The cigar box contained about eight hundred and forty dollars, which was a lordly sum, but not enough money to pay off our many debts and see us through the winter. We needed at least two hundred dollars more, so we guided the *Maggie Murphy* into the broad reaches of Tenakee Inlet, and cleared decks for a grand assault on the fall run of king salmon. It was our last chance to make a stake, and we were determined not to fail.

Tenakee Inlet was a region greatly favored by unfortunate fishermen who were forced to operate late in the year. The twenty-mile-long body of water, extending off the treacherous waters of Chatham Straits, cuts through high hills that shelter it from the full force of winds, and fishing is possible here in all but the worst of storms. Furthermore, king salmon inhabit the inlet, and a doggedly determined fisherman can often show a good profit, even in late fall. We docked at the tiny settlement of Tenakee Hot Springs, where we found all the laggards and delinquents of Bear Harbor assembled, and dourly preparing for the miserable time that lay ahead.

After Ed and I had fished here about a week, complete discouragement once again took hold of us. There were a few big king salmon in the inlet, but we couldn't catch them because we didn't know how to "choke herring." Herring choking is the art of baiting a dead herring on a hook, and pegging him with a cedar splint so that he will flutter through the water in a manner that will convince salmon that he is alive. All good fishermen use herring for bait when the salmon are scarce, but we couldn't seem to master the art of baiting these

tiny fish. - Furthermore, we had no herring net, and the only way we could gather bait was to beg from the other fishermen.

We tried returning to the brass spoons we had used all summer, but the salmon snubbed these imitation lures, and bit on the herring the other fishermen were offering. We were almost despondent when we acquired a new friend, who offered to lead us out of this den of herring chokers, and show us the one and only path to a winter stake. He was a twenty-two-year-old trolling-boat owner named Hal Sigurdson, who sailed into Tenakee Inlet a few days after our arrival.

Sigurdson was a tall, bony native-born white Alaskan, whose devil-may-care attitude stood out, even in this land of footloose people. Although he was unshaven and ragged, he was an accomplished fisherman. He knew how to choke herring with the best of them, but he sneered at this "stinky bait."

"Come on, let's get out of here," he said to us. "These squareheads use herring for bait every time they get hard up. Why use stinky bait when you can catch fish with spoons if you get away from the chokers? Let's go prospecting for fish!"

We greeted Sigurdson's proposal with enthusiasm, so the following morning, we fell in at the stern of his nameless boat, and left the hard-luck fleet of Tenakee Inlet far behind. Sigurdson led us across Chatham Straits, and down the shores of Admiralty Island to the little settlement of Tyee, where we docked that afternoon.

"We'll spend the night here, and go over to Cape Fanshaw tomorrow," he said. "I can find fish over there."

When we went ashore to stretch our legs, Sigurdson warned us to be careful.

"Admiralty Island is the favorite stomping ground of brown bears," he said. "If a ton of brownie gets on your trail, the only thing you can do is climb a tree, and it better be a big tree, or he'll grab the trunk in his paws and shake you out, like a coconut."

We paid heed to his words of caution, for in the native village on Icy Straits we had seen two people who had been badly maimed by the huge brown bears.

EARLY the next morning when we resumed our journey, a heavy swell was rolling in on Frederick Sound from the ocean, and the sky had an ominous red tint. These were symptoms of an impending storm, but Sigurdson didn't seem to worry, so neither did we. Our boats had reached a point about halfway across the sound when it happened; a sudden blast of wind swept out of the east and grew steadily in velocity, until it blossomed out into a full-fledged southeasterly gale.

The *Maggie Murphy's* very existence was threatened, so we turned back to Tyee, but the wind began to shriek and the storm became so vicious we saw we could never make it to shore. One huge comber tore off a bow pole, and another plucked open the hatch, as the boat rolled and tossed, and Ed and I hung on to the walls of the pilothouse, wondering what would happen next. We couldn't make it across the Sound, and we couldn't get back to shore, so we did the only thing left to do: Near us were two tiny rocky islands, and we flew behind them and took shelter on their lee shore, where the force of the wind and waves was not so severe.

Sigurdson tumbled in behind us; then he began cautiously to probe into a group of reefs, and we followed, since he seemed to be familiar with this place. He led us into a tiny harbor, that was fairly well protected, and what was more important, boasted a log piling driven into the shallow water, where we could tie up and forget about the danger of dragging anchor. There was also a cabin ashore, that appeared to be inhabited.

We had scarcely secured our boat when an elderly character emerged from the cabin, pushed a skiff into

the water and rowed out to greet us. We were soon to learn that this man was Lacey Edwards, who owned these two islands, and maintained them as a fox farm and a hermit's paradise from which all other humans were barred.

He was a small, thin man with a weather-beaten simple face, and he was dressed in heavy wool clothing that was so crusted with dirt its color was not distinguishable. His hair was so long and shaggy it covered his shirt collar in back.

"Be you in trouble?" he asked, as he rowed alongside.

Ed patiently explained to him that the *Maggie Murphy* could not weather the storm.

"Anything I could bring you out?" he asked.

After we indicated that we were quite self-sufficient he rowed on to Sigurdson's boat, and conducted a conversation there. Suddenly, we saw Sigurdson throw his sleeping bag into the skiff, then leap in himself, while the old man waved his arms in protest. Sigurdson stood in the skiff, and directed the fox farmer back to the *Maggie Murphy*, where Ed and I were rolling up our sleeping bags. We welcomed this opportunity to visit ashore, but Lacey Edwards was definitely not rolling out the red rug for us.

"No, no! You can't come ashore here," he was protesting. "It will upset my whole routine. No one is allowed ashore here."

BUT Sigurdson, who obviously knew the old-timer, would take none of this inhospitality.

"Darned right we're coming ashore," he said. "Do you think we're going to sit here on these clammy boats while you've got a warm cabin a hundred yards away? Say, have you boys met Lacey Edwards?" he shouted, as we jumped into the big skiff.

Lacey protested all the way ashore, and all the way up to the cabin, where a dozen foxes scurried into the brush as we approached. When the old man opened the door, a half dozen more scampered out of the house, right between our legs, and high-tailed off into the woods.

"Ooooh, you've scared them," Lacey moaned. He was constantly moaning, above and below his breath. He seemed to be utterly convinced that our intrusion of the island would bring about his complete ruin.

His cabin was large, warm and cozy, but it was filthy in every respect. However, it looked extremely inviting to us, and following Sigurdson's cue, we flopped our sleeping bags on the floor, and made ourselves right at home.

"How long are you going to stay?" Lacey asked, with a quiver in his voice.

"Until the wind stops blowing," Sigurdson answered abruptly.

"Ooooh—" Lacey moaned.

"Now listen," Sigurdson said. "We don't want to be here any more than you want us here. But we can't leave until the storm's over, so quit your complaining."

After this tongue-lashing, Lacey grabbed up several foul-smelling sacks, and ran off into the brush to feed his foxes, and we followed to look over the island.

"Lacey has a screw loose, but he's harmless," Sigurdson explained, as we strolled against the strong wind. "I've known him for years. He comes out and talks every time I tie up in the harbor, but he's never let me come ashore. To hell with him. We'll stay here until we get darned good and ready to leave."

The two tiny islets were hardly three blocks long. A tiny passage of water, that was dry at low tide, separated them. Like hundreds of other islands in southeastern Alaska, they literally teemed with foxes that had been turned loose to roam and multiply. There was no need for fences, since the animals couldn't escape from their rocky home.

As the three of us walked through the brush, little, beady-eyed foxes peered at us through bushes, scampered across the trail ahead of us, and bristled and yipped when we surprised them. They were terrifically curious about us, yet we could frighten them out of their wits by merely making a quick jump in their direction.

Some of them ran into feeding pens, thinking that we were Lacey coming to feed them. These feeding pens were small wire enclosures, with a trapdoor that could be dropped shut. The feed was thrown into these pens to accustom the foxes to eating here, and make them easy to trap when the time came to kill the mature animals and take their pelts for the fur market.

The fox farmer was in a rebellious mood that night, as he prepared dinner. He didn't offer us a scrap of food, no doubt fearing that this would encourage us to stay longer. He cooked his meal, then sat down at the table with his back to us, and devoured every last morsel on his plate. He probably thought he could starve us out, but he didn't know that the moment he left to feed his foxes each day, Sigurdson would break into his larder and make us sandwiches or serve anything he found that could be eaten without being cooked. As if this were not enough, Sigurdson would then take over the bed, and sleep soundly until we awoke him when we saw Lacey returning.

We found that the old-timer would be talkative and sociable only when we discussed his favorite subject—foxes. He just loved these little beasts, and he gave them full run of his cabin, bed, kitchen and all. They wouldn't come near us, but they besieged him continually, begging for handouts of dried salmon which he was always throwing them. He seemed to have a name for every one of the hundreds of animals that roamed the two islands.

"Ooooh, I just can't bear to kill 'em and skin 'em," he said. "When the time comes for that, I hire somebody to do it, and go ashore for a week. It's terrible!"

On the fourth evening, the persistent southeaster blew itself out, and Lacey was quick to point out that the storm was over. He was absolutely overjoyed when Sigurdson announced that we would leave in the morning.

"Why don't you go out on your boats tonight, and get ready for an early start," Lacey suggested hopefully.

The next morning as the old-timer rowed us out to our vessels, he actually seemed to be suffering pangs of remorse over the way he had treated us. He offered to sell us gas or food, if we needed it, and he even went so far as to meekly invite us to come back again, "sometime." But he immediately appeared to have regretted saying this, when Sigurdson snapped back: "I'll remember that!"

Lacey then dumped us off on our boats as if we were garbage, and sped back toward the beach.

We realized that the greatest favor we could do this old sourdough was just to leave and never come back.

As the *Maggie Murphy* nosed her way out through the reefs cluttering the harbor entrance, we saw Lacey pulling his skiff up on the beach, surrounded by foxes.

CHAPTER XIII

WINTER WANDERLAND



As the *Maggie Murphy* pulled away from her sanctuary in the tiny islands, we could be sure of but one thing: our season was finished. Winter had moved into the rocky channels and current-swept passages of Alaska. The southeaster which had driven us to shelter was no temporary freak wind, like the Glacier Bay gale that had frightened us on Icy Straits.

It was a raging four-day storm that roared in from the Pacific Ocean with the power of the Almighty. It was the first big storm of the winter season, but not the last by any means. For the next eight months these gales would lash the southeastern coast continuously, hardly giving mariners a breathing spell.

We finally reached Cape Fanshaw, and made a pretense of fishing, but it was hopeless. The rain and spray soaked our clothes, and the *Maggie Murphy* took on so much sea and rain water we had to bail continually to stay afloat. Sigurdson finally drew alongside us, cupped his hands and shouted:

"It's no use. I'm going in to Petersburg."

We hadn't the slightest idea of where we could go, or what we could do, now that winter had caught us not quite prepared. So we followed his boat down the long south arm of the sound to the foaming tide-swept entrance to Wrangell Narrows, and then docked at Petersburg, wet and discouraged.

The two of us now faced a very difficult decision. We had some eight hundred dollars in cash, which would cover all our debts, but leave us only about two hundred dollars apiece to face the winter. This wasn't enough, unless we were to hole up in some deserted harbor; live aboard the boat, and trust our hunting luck for meat. We realized that such a winter spent in the poorly insulated, leaky *Maggie Murphy* would be a harrowing experience. But we had to do something, and we had to do it soon. This aimless wandering about the Territory would put us in the poorhouse.

WE didn't even toy with the idea of making Petersburg our winter home. This little town was clean and modern, but we didn't belong here. The city was populated and owned almost entirely by persons of Norwegian blood, or descent. Everybody here was an Olson, Johnson or Somethinson. We felt that a pair of non-Norwegians just wouldn't have a chance of finding work in the winter, especially if jobs were scarce. Even Swedes spoke softly in this place; you just had to be "Norsk."

That afternoon I entered a barber shop to have three months' growth of hair clipped, and seated myself in a chair presided over by a barber named A. T. Olsen, according to a placard on the wall. We had a long conversation while he was clipping and he drew out my name, the name of my boat, and the nature of my work in Alaska. When our friendship reached a fruitful stage, he suddenly gazed furtively around the shop to be sure no one was listening, then bent over and whispered into my ear:

"I'm no Norwegian. I just took that name to get a job in town. I'm Pat Reagan," he added, as he extended his hand under the cloth that covered me.

We soon decided that our best bet was to return to Port Alexander, where the merchants extended credit eagerly, and where there were plenty of empty buildings that might provide us with a cheap room for the winter. We figured that by staying on the *Maggie Murphy* until the bitter cold set in, and living frugally, we might make it through the winter on what we had.

The trip from Petersburg to Port Alexander was a nightmare. We traveled back up Frederick Sound in a thick mist that blotted the shoreline, crossed Chatham Straits on a storm swell, and moved down the west shore of the straits in a driving rain. As we neared the ocean, huge waves that appeared to be three times the size of our boat jostled us violently. When the *Maggie Murphy* finally tumbled through the harbor's entrance on the shoulders of a big gray sea swell, she nosed in with her tail between her legs.

Port Alexander had all but pulled in its main street for the winter. Every fishing boat here had been moved

to the lagoon at the extreme end of the harbor, for protection against the swells that would make their way through the entrance in winter storms. There wasn't a soul in sight in the rain-soaked village, for the "summer crowd" had deserted the place, and there was no one left but the handful of permanent residents.

But a welcoming committee quickly turned out, when we appeared on the plank street. Old-timers emerged from the bar, and gave us a big greeting, since new faces in the community were extremely rare at this time of year. After we announced our intentions of wintering here, the whole community turned out, and everyone seemed delighted. The Marshal, with his goatee slicked down, and his cap at a jaunty angle, delivered what amounted to a welcoming speech.

"You'll be the only young bucks in the place all winter," he said. "We're mighty glad to have you. Settle down and make yourselves to home. I can sell you some good real estate if you've a mind to build."

We held a conference with the owner of the local restaurant, to determine just how much it would cost us to winter in the port. He offered to feed us for two dollars per day, "just to keep some new faces around." He said if we lived on the boat, we could probably get through the cold season on two hundred and fifty dollars apiece, "with a little credit."

The routine of the winter day here was extremely drab, and it didn't change from Sunday to Saturday. Everyone slept late in the morning; and it wasn't until noon that most of the men got up, and headed for the tavern.

The Marshal would start the conversation officially, and settle all problems and establish all policies at the proper level. The moment he strode into the room, swinging his cane, and pawing his gray goatee, the talk would start in earnest, and everything from how to catch salmon to the Communist problem would come up for a good round of discussion.

It was something of a novelty to us the first day, but the procedure was getting boring on the second day. When we entered the tavern the third day, we weren't sure we could weather another twelve hours in the place. The day began as usual about eleven o'clock. When the Marshal arrived, a big card game started up, but the game halted at frequent intervals while the old-timer expounded his latest political theory.

"Russia never gave up Alaska!" he thundered. "The Reds never recognized the Czar's treaty! They teach their kids that Alaska belongs to Russia! You'll see a Russian battleship right outside this harbor one of these mornings."

THIS statement brought the babble in the place to a roar, as some objected and others agreed. Through it all, the bartender maintained a completely hands-off policy, as far as all opinions were concerned. He would pour a drink when one was ordered, then stand stiffly behind the counter, with one hand on the beer tap, his eyes shut and his face screwed up into a sour look, grandly ignoring all the talk.

At midnight, the place would close, and the bartender would drive us all out, like cows being shooed out of a barn.

Something in Ed and me snapped that third day, and we began to do a lot of thinking. If we were to spend eight months wintering in Port Alexander, it would be a blank page in our lives. We would be accomplishing nothing, but growing eight months older. If we were to fall in with these old-timers, and get roots in such a place as this, we could see ourselves twenty-five years from now by just looking around this bar room. There was nothing wrong with these people, but we just didn't want to live the way they did. We crawled into our cold

sleeping bags that night, grimly determined to abandon Port Alexander at dawn.

We didn't say a word to anyone that next morning. We just started the *Maggie Murphy*, plowed out of the lagoon, through the harbor, and plunged out through the entrance into a heaving, graybacked sea, bound for Ketchikan. If there was nothing else there, we would see bright lights, and plenty of faces.

Never before in her career did the *Maggie Murphy* perform more valiantly, than on this trip. She clawed her way across the twenty-mile-wide mouth of Chatham Straits in a sea so rough it made us sick at heart to find ourselves risking our young lives aboard a clam shell of a boat in such weather. She battled steep tide rips off Cape Decision, and plunged through a vicious chop in Sumner Straits, to finally bring us to Point Baker harbor, where we stopped for the night. The handful of cabin dwellers here were so torpid from hibernation they would hardly even look out their windows as we entered the place, although we must have been the first boat in here in at least a week.

The next day, the *Maggie Murphy* successfully battled her way to Clarence Straits, in a continuous high wind and driving rain. By nightfall we were approaching the entrance to Tongass Narrows, but the wind howled now, and the boat was barely making progress. With what seemed to be her final burst of strength, she fought her way into the narrows, where we could see the lights of Ketchikan shining in the distance.

To us, the lights of New York couldn't have seemed brighter.

FEW people have ever accused Ketchikan of being heaven, but Ed and I were convinced we had entered the pearly gates as soon as we docked in Thomas Basin. We knew we had friends here, since the *Randy* would be in town, and the solid row of neon lights along the street above us was a sight to behold, after a summer spent mainly in the wilderness. We could scarcely spare the time to lash the *Maggie Murphy* to the float, before clomping up town in our boots, looking for Al Berge-son.

The town seemed entirely different from the Ketchikan we had visited in the spring. The stores, bars and restaurants were crowded with cash-carrying customers, taxis were busy, and everyone seemed relaxed and pleasant, instead of tense and worried. The salmon were in the cans, the fishing fleet was in winter quarters; and the wealth produced by the summer's activities was in the wallets of these people on the streets. They had no more worries about making money; their only problem now was spending their cash, or making it last, whichever they preferred. Ketchikan's cycle of prosperity was now at its peak.

We found Al, and he let out a whoop that nearly brought down the house, when he saw us. We had only to look at his dapper clothes to know that he was flush. Al quickly informed us that the *Randy* had enjoyed a big year; and not to be outdone, we told him that we had done well ourselves. He immediately vanished to summon the crew of the *Randy*, and throw a party to celebrate our safe return, and prosperous season.

The party was a rollicking affair, with the five crewmen of the *Randy* fighting for the privilege of buying drinks.

When the party broke up in early morning, we returned to the *Maggie Murphy*, very hilarious, but no nearer a solution to our winter problem. The next day we visited the post office, and made out money orders that paid in full every creditor we had in Alaska. Then we divided the money left, and each of us pocketed a little over two hundred dollars.

As we walked back to the *Maggie Murphy*, I broached a delicate subject to Ed. After pondering the problem secretly for several days, I had decided to leave Alaska. On the few occasions that our mail had caught up to us during the summer, I had received lengthy letters from my family, urging me to come home and enter college. In their most recent letters they had offered to foot all my expenses in school. My experiences of the summer had taught me that this big stake we were seeking was very elusive, and we might never make it. We had met fishermen in Alaska who had been seeking their pot of gold for twenty-five years.

So I explained to Ed that I believed it would be more profitable to me if I were to spend the winter in school, rather than by marking time in Ketchikan. But I assured him that I would certainly return to Alaska next spring.

The news shook Ed, for he had planned on our staying together for the winter, and at least another summer. He thought a long time, as we strolled toward the boat, then he gave his answer.

"Go ahead," he said. "But I'm staying in Alaska. I like it here, and there's nothing in the States for me. I think I can find work here this winter, and move off the boat. But I'll take care of the *Maggie Murphy* until you come back."

We made a solemn agreement to meet in Ketchikan the following May fifteenth. Then he accompanied me to the ticket office, where I bought a steerage compartment steamship ticket to Seattle. After that, we both bought new clothes, took steam baths, and had our hair cut. We looked civilized again, and we felt clean and prosperous.

It seemed strange to be gathering up my belongings from the cabin of the *Maggie Murphy*, to leave her for good. She was my home, and although I had cursed her confined cabin and leaky ceiling, I never realized how attached I had become to her aged old hide. I couldn't help but feel that she knew I was leaving her here in this strange port, and that she regarded it as a scurvy trick.

IT was like deserting two old friends when I lugged my baggage off the *Maggie Murphy* on sailing day, and bade Ed goodbye at the gangplank. He showed no emotion, but he never did, anyway. He just stood there and stared intently as he watched me walk aboard this big steamer bound for our home town, and I knew he envied me. But he showed no indication that he regretted his decision to stay in Alaska.

The whistle thundered, and we pulled away from the dock, and slowly moved along the waterfront. As the ship passed Thomas Basin, I caught a glimpse of the *Maggie Murphy*. She was just sitting on the water motionless, but her big eyes, that usually seemed to be looking down, appeared to be looking up, with apprehension, at the snow on the hills above town. She was lonely, bewildered and tired.

The steamer moved down Tongass Narrows in a brisk wind, and a driving rain that shut off all sight of shore. It was a tremendous relief to be afloat and have no worries about navigation, winds or tides. If I were on the *Maggie Murphy*, I would be fretting over the charts, bemoaning the poor visibility, and watching the engine with a gimlet eye. But a huge steam engine was propelling me now; and on the bridge, a captain was shouldering all worries about the safety of the ship.

I lay down in my bunk, and soaked up the warmth, security and comfort this big vessel offered. As I lay there, I thought of events of the past summer, and of the forlorn little *Maggie Murphy* I had left behind. But most of all I wondered if I could keep my promise to Ed, and return the following spring.

Who's Who in this Issue

John J. Ryan

(From the end of the *Maggie Murphy* voyage to now)

I LEFT Ed and the *Maggie Murphy* in Ketchikan in the fall of 1940, and entered the University of Washington School of Journalism. But the following spring, I returned to Alaska, re-joined Ed, and spent another summer on the *Maggie Murphy*. That fall, it became obvious that both of us were to be drafted, so we sold our boat for \$225, and parted company. Ed settled in Sitka, and I returned to the University to get in as much schooling as I could before going into the service. Both of us have regretted the fact that we sold our *Maggie Murphy*, and we intend to buy her back some day. We can always trace her through the registration number.

I attended school, and worked part time as a reporter for the *Seattle Post Intelligencer* until September of 1942, when I joined the Navy, twenty-four months of this time being sea duty in the Pacific. Toward the end of the war, the Navy took note of the fact that I had newspaper experience, and assigned me to the staff of the *Navy News* of Guam, a daily newspaper.

Immediately after being discharged from the Navy in 1946, I returned to Alaska, this time by automobile. I offered to prove to a Seattle newspaper that it was possible to drive from Seattle to Alaska in sixty hours. The idea seemed preposterous to the city editor, since driving time *via* the Alcan Highway is from eight to fifteen days. But he offered to buy the story and pictures, if I made the trip in the time promised. I purchased a 1937 Hudson with my war savings, enlisted the aid of a friend of Tacoma, and started the trip.

Following back roads in British Columbia, we made our way to Prince Rupert, and ferried across Chatham Straits to Ketchikan. The trip north took five days, since we spent two days camping by the road, repairing the engine. But then we turned around, and in a riotous trip, drove back to Seattle in 63 hours, and 47 minutes; the newspaper bought the story, and made a rotogravure section out of my pictures. I still claim the record for the fastest auto trip from Alaska to the United States. But the record is unofficial.

I returned to the University of Washington, and continued my schooling on the G. I. Bill, and also worked nights for the *Tacoma Times*, as a reporter. In May of 1947 I became night editor of the *Seattle bureau* of United

Press, where I worked until May of 1948. I then resigned, married my wife Patricia Ann, and immediately left on a very rugged honeymoon by auto, up the Alcan highway to Alaska. We settled in Anchorage, where I have been managing editor of the *Daily News* for the past two years. We have one child, Stephen Matthew, age eight months. Both of us like the Territory, and we intend to make our home here.

I am twenty-nine years old, almost a graduate of the University of Washington Journalism School, and a newspaper man by profession. I resigned my post as managing editor of the *Anchorage News* this month, to accept a position with United Press. I am now a staff correspondent with the wire service, in charge of Alaska news coverage.



Dodson Graybeal

FIRST Lieutenant Dodson Graybeal, who was raised on a farm near Mannsville, Kentucky, joined the U. S. Air Force in 1942 shortly after Pearl Harbor. He was twenty-two then—and now has thirty missions over Germany and twenty-four hundred hours of flight time, more than half of it in a B-29, under his belt. As a B-24 pilot based near Norwich, England, his plane was hit several times when he flew supplies to a British paratrooper division cut off from its main force and stranded on the German side of the Rhine after the enemy had infiltrated back into France. The outfit finally was rescued after U. S. forces broke through.

He has flown into at least a dozen typhoons during the past two years in the western Pacific, but he claims their

cross-currents and vertical drafts are not nearly as frightening as ack-ack and German fighter planes. He is single.

William Ashley Anderson

WILLIAM ASHLEY ANDERSON was born in New Jersey in 1890. He was for a time connected with the importing business in China and Africa and was unofficially present during the Chinese Revolution of 1911, the Mongolian troubles of 1912-'13 and the Civil War in Abyssinia in 1916. He had been a member of the 7th Regiment of the New York National Guard; and in 1917 he became a company commander in the King's African Rifles. In 1918 he transferred to the American Army in France.

Mr. Anderson has for years been an occasional contributor to *BLUE BOOK*. Concerning his remarkable article "Wang Gods of the Orient," he writes:

"References may be difficult to find in English, since most translations from Chinese and Japanese have been made by missionaries and educators who were not interested in military subjects. I found in Washington that officials of the Office of Strategic Services knew of Wutzu and Suntzu, and studied them in connection with their work. The only published work I know is the following:

"*'THE BOOK OF WAR.'* (119 pages). This comprises the Articles of Suntzu and the sayings of Wutzu. It is an English translation from the Chinese by Capt. E. F. Calthrop, Royal Field Artillery; published by John Murray, London, 1908.

"I ran across this in connection with British staff studies."

Robert J. McCaig

MINNE is no Sindbad saga. Born in Seattle in 1907, I was brought to Montana in 1915, and stayed. Shortly after finishing high school in 1923, I went to work in the operating department of a large power company, and after twenty-five years of it, I still find it a colorful and exciting business.

I began putting down some of the tales and the characters on paper, but it was 1947 before I made my first sale. Since then I have sold a number of stories, most of them dealing, naturally, with the utility industry. Spare-time writing leaves little spare time, but being single, I manage to indulge mildly in bowling and boating, and that favorite hobby of writers, talking shop.

BLUE BOOK

A painting of a large white steamship with multiple decks and a black lantern in the foreground. The ship has two prominent smokestacks and a complex rig of masts and ropes. People are visible on the upper decks. The foreground shows a rocky shore with a black lantern on a post and some figures. The sky is a pale, hazy blue.

MAGAZINE FOR ADVENTUROUS READING



MARCH, 1951

THE CRUISE OF THE MAGGIE MURPHY

The true story of two boys who built a
boat and went salmon fishing off Alaska
by John J. Ryan

THE UNPREMEDITATED WIZARD

by Nelson Bond

SIX HOURS TO DIXIE

by Wilbur S. Peacock

WAR GODS OF THE ORIENT

by William Ashley Anderson